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LONDON NIGHTS

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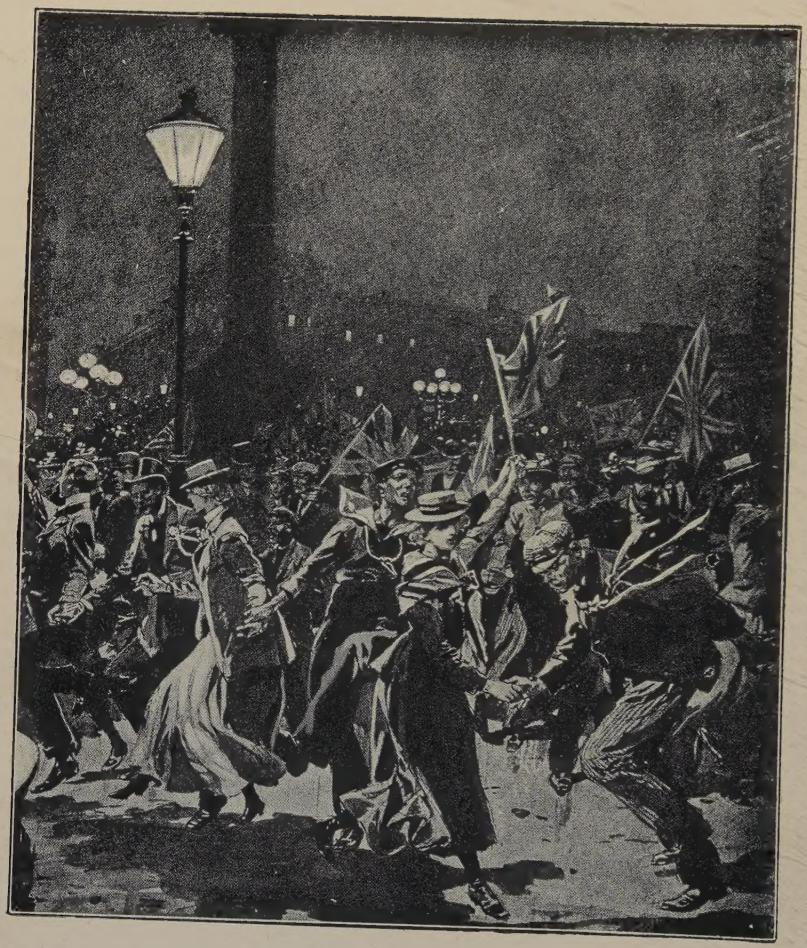

"Mafficking"

LONDON NIGHTS
IN THE GAY NINETIES

BY

SHAW DESMOND

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

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TO ABSENT FRIENDS

TWITTERLIGHT

The man without a memory is the man without a shadow. He is the man without a background, for it is in memory that we live again. In this twitterlight of memory, in which there will of necessity be found many omissions, perhaps many discrepancies, I have sent my ghost a-wander through the London night of long ago, expectant to its magic. For that magic I have not looked. I have let it come to me if it would.

In doing so, I have tried, however modestly, to make this little volume the pen-picture of a period of what now seems a strange, almost an old-world beauty, that began in the 'nineties and vanished, never to return, a few years before the Great War, in the Age of Air, and I trust I shall be forgiven even as I hope to forgive.

Ladies and gentlemen—I thank you!

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LONDON NIGHTS

IN THE GAY NINETIES

I

MEMORY'S MAGIC BOX

MEMORY is the only joy that never fails and time is the only kindly thing of life. It is memory that softens the harsher outlines, that mellows our judgments, that reveals people and things in the generous twilight of retrospection.

Perhaps it is the magic of memory that makes of the London of the turn of the century a very dear friend, and the ghosts of the men and women who then haunted it as kindly spirits instinct with beauty and intelligence. And when these ghosts, pouring out of memory's magic box, move, as they do, through the glamour of night, of the London night, like none other in the world, stealing to me out of the dead past, I feel once more the touch of vanished hands and the night once more is murmurous with voices stilled for ever.

But what am I talking about! They are not all dead yet.

I am still in my forties, but the London of to-day is as different from the London which I remember of a quarter of a century ago as the modern night club is different from the old Aquarium or from Exeter Hall. Even those of us still in the prime of middle life are living in a London of a flavour as different and of types as diverse from the flavour and types of that period of quiet enchantments as though we had emerged into another existence on another plane. The War changed the world. It also changed us.

Twenty-five to thirty years ago, man had not leaped into the air. "Wireless," like the living picture and the motor

car, was but a dream unborn. People had not forgotten how to wonder. The London woman corseted her body and perhaps her soul, but let the original Eve out in frills and furbelows. The London night of that age was a top-hatted, feathered and flaunting night. But into that night the young girl, who was just beginning to break out from her " stays " and glass case, was not allowed . . . at least not if she were *respectable*, the word behind which the Ten Commandments were so often titteringly, secretly broken.

" A night Up West " was then the limit of original sin. The wood block was challenging macadam, but the back blocks were still cobbled. Gas and " growlers " were still with us. Kings still kept their heads and their crowns. The German Emperor was as sure and static as Everest. Russia was a Great White Secret. The Yellow Peril had begun to mutter, it is true, but only on newspaper bills and in the headlines. Socialism was a bad joke.

Frank Slavin and Peter Jackson only the day before yesterday had been the luminaries of the ring, and the sledge-hammer of John L. Sullivan was not yet a legend. Mabel Love was still a lovely dream, Lily Langtry a dream that was fading. Tosti's " Good-bye ! " and " For Ever and for Ever ! " were whispering to millions, and Lottie Collins was dancing her tumultuous way into fame to her ecstatic " Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," while Caruso's golden voice had still to sing its way across the world.

The gas-lit festoons of the Earls Court Exhibition were, for those millions, the extreme of fantasy and " shooting the chutes " a one-minute's delirium, as Eugene Sandow, for anæmic youth, was the perfection of manly beauty—for it was the day of spring-grip dumb-bell and giant biceps. Arthur Collins's " transformations " at Drury Lane, in that period of swelling hip and generous calf, were the last thing in shows, and Mrs. Ormiston Chant the last thing in daring.

But no imagination, however fevered, had then conjured a Pankhurst.

If you were hungry and thirsty, you abated your pangs in the prim respectability of the pioneer tea-shops. If your thirst was spiritual, you slaked it either in the hectic revivals of Exeter Hall or sat under the slightly explosive ministrations of Dr. Joseph Parker in the City Temple. If you were truly respectable, you were a member of the Church of England—but if a "Radical," and therefore slightly lower than the angels, you hurried into the chapels of Nonconformity or risked eternal frustration by joining with a select damned few the Rationalist Press Association.

Vegetarianism, which has since died an unnatural death, was then a religion demoniacally prosecuted by a red-headed, red-bearded person named Bernard Shaw, who was raising the devil on carrots. The sun of a youngish man named Wells was still lifting steadily above the literary horizon upon his "Time Machine" and "Food of the Gods," but this earthy visionary had even then begun to put the world in order. A dreaming young Irishman, Yeats by name, was sighing for Innisfree, in the Euston Road.

Gladstone was then a distant Olympian thunder receding in space, but the apostle of screws and empire, Joseph Chamberlain, stuck his nose and his monocle into your face from every page. An "Irish night" at Westminster was the hope of the newsboy and the joy of the-man-in-the-street; and John Redmond, the Old Eagle, the ghost of Parnell at his shoulder, stared into destiny from his seat on the green benches.

The Boer was the "Hun" of that day, and President Krüger the bogy of inhuman wickedness, intent, with a rising young Welsh solicitor, a Mr. Lloyd George, and the other "Little Englanders," upon "staggering humanity" and disrupting the British Empire.

A little later, the Suffragettes are to burst like some unnatural phenomenon upon an astonished world to let loose a hell of screeching furies—but that is not yet, and the lordly male still sleeps secure beneath the sentinelling of Big Ben. An astute Scot, Ramsay MacDonald, and his friend the enemy, a vitriolic Englishman named Philip Snowden, are perhaps already turning uneasily in their sleep to dream of premierships, for have they not watched a man in a cloth cap walk into the sacred precincts by the Thames? For Keir Hardie has already shocked the Mother of Parliaments, Mrs. Grundy herself. The old lady is at this time still vigorous, but beginning to feel her years.

Jack Williams, a little man in a black beard, like Napoleon, marches his unemployed down to Tower Hill in the morning, and back again at night as recurrent as the tides, whilst "three men of Belial," John Burns, Ben Tillett, and Tom Mann, lead the world to revolution under the Red Flag, whose ominous fluttering is for the first time to be seen against the smoky background of the London streets.

The British Army marches stiffly in the glory of scarlet and gold to "Soldiers of the Queen" and "Oh! listen to the Band," for the lithe, pale boy in khaki is still but a ghost of to-morrow. Jack sometimes wears a beard, and doesn't care his perennial damn, whilst the "halls" resound to the jingo jingle: "Let 'em all come!"

Mr. Whitaker Wright had made dramatic exit in the very face of outraged law, and another Titan of finance, Jabez Spencer Balfour, of the Liberator crash, had shocked the Nonconformist Conscience by being twenty years ahead of his time—in that day the sin unforgivable. Another gentleman, a Mr. Horatio Bottomley, was staggering the world of finance by a John Bullishness disconcertingly astute, and yet another, a Mr. Ernest Terah Hooley, who, in

the popular imagination, had replaced the Colossus of Rhodes, Empire builder, was doing the same.

Society exercises its monocle and its fan about the problems of a playwright named Pinero, for Society is still very, very innocent, and "Iris" and "Mrs. Tanqueray" are to it frightfully involved and difficult. It is, however, quite decided about "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and shivers in its strawberry leaves.

Maeterlinck and Barrie have begun to work their magic, but they are still only pale shadows in the London twilights.

But out of the nights of long ago there come the crash and time of John Philip Sousa and the tinkle-tinkle of the ghosty music of the "Egyptian Hall of Mystery," where old Mr. Maskelyne is then "young" Mr. Maskelyne and high priest. The wit of Dan Leno is rocketing off the ponderous bulk of Herbert Campbell, and little Edmund Payne leans his aching head upon the marble table before going in to kill his bull in "The Toreador" at the Gaiety, whilst George Grossmith urges him on to victory or death. Men and women are sleeping under newspapers in the frozen nights of the Embankment, but just over the water the old Canterbury is gay with gilt and gas from 7.45 to midnight.

Johnny Danvers' tambourine whacks itself gaily at the end of the black-faced white-fronted garland of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels in the St. James's Hall, whilst in the wilds of Westminster the antics of the Boxing Kangaroo are rivalling that other aquarium across the road, and as full of queer fish, performing before a world still credulous of politics.

The glories of the "Old Middlesex" are beginning to dim, but "The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" is breaking it every night in the Empire or Tivoli or Alhambra. For the Hippodrome has yet to come, and the lions which Julius Seeth is to lead into the cream and crimson of the

caged circus have not yet been born. "Daisy Bell" on her bicycle built for two is only an echo and Harry Lauder has not been heard of, but Albert Chevalier is already "knocking 'em in the Old Kent Road," and young Marie Lloyd is winking and Little Tich is flapping a way into the sentimental heart of the Great British Public.

"The Honeysuckle and the Bee," the rollicking "Hi-tiddley-hi-ti-hi-ti-ti!" and the stately inconsequent "Queen of the Earth" are coming, and a Lancashire lass named Gertie Millar will soon be dancing her slender daintiness across the stage of the old Gaiety, whilst one almost begins to catch the faint refrain of Harry Fragson's "Whispers of Love" floating down the night breezes. But the luscious trolling of Courtice Pounds in cap and bells is already stealing away the senses of his hearers in "O mistress mine, where are you roaming?"

The lights of Piccadilly are fainter than to-day, as they wind their length into the farther distance—away towards that resort of lovers, Hyde Park, the hem of its garment still untouched. And the flagstones under the spluttering blue of the arc lights are filled with peacocks, gorgeous of frill and feather, with those other night-birds, solemnly replete in black crush opera-hat and white shirt front, who pass, dodo-like, to the club and the play, ogling as they go.

For in those days, ere "the pictures" had made broken crockery of the imagination, the play was the thing.

Across the stage of the Lyceum there moves a queer, dominating figure declaiming with a voice of rusty hinges: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And, if you wrong us, *shall we not revenge*?" He is followed by the lightsome grace of his play-mate, a merry wife of Windsor. The genius of "Her Majesty's," lean and cross-gartered, stalks through the motley of "Twelfth Night," whilst the

LOOKING DOWN ON OUR FRIENDS.

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"Stars that Twinkled Long Ago."

voice of his daughter Viola, slender young thing, comes out of the upper air of "The Tempest," and the dark, gracious presence of "Mrs. Pat" fills the theatre with its perfume. . . .

Henry Irving and Ellen Terry; Charles Wyndham and Mary Moore; Cyril Maude and Winifred Emery; Beerbohm Tree, George Alexander, Martin Harvey—and a kindly little figure now nearing the end of a long day—John Hare in "A Pair of Spectacles."

Dear ghosts of the past, of the living as well as of the dead, as the fainted lamps of the old Embankment show themselves through the haze and the golden lights go up in Leicester Square, come out of the twilight and walk with me for yet a little while through the London night.

II

INTERMEZZO

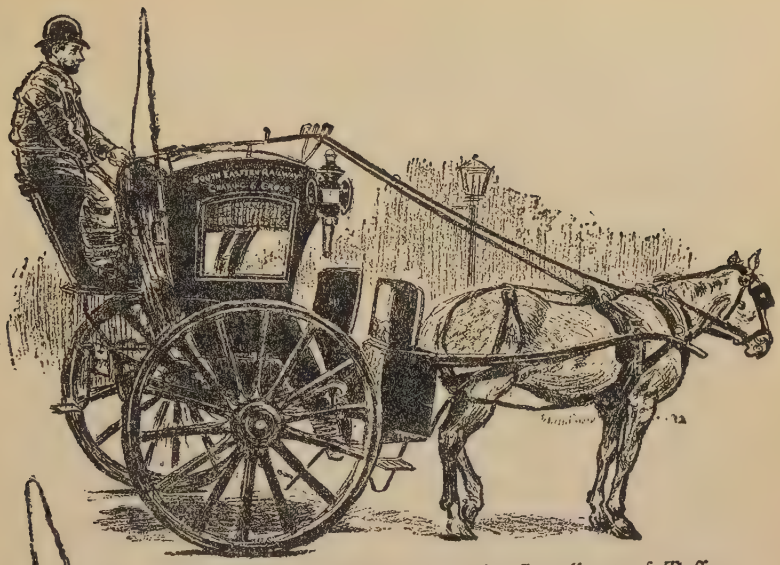
LOOKING back through the London that is vanished, as a child, wistful, will look at the pantomime curtain when the lights have gone out and the glory has faded, the story unrolls, not through the rise and fall of governments, not through the major events of life, but through those ill-considered trifles which, at the moment, seemed transient, of no account.

When I let my mind wander back through the garden of memory, it is to light upon certain things, persons and places with as little sequence as the butterfly that flutters from flower to flower. These 'lighting-points of memory often seem unrelated, but they are for me, as for millions, sign-posts to mark the inevitable, relentless flux of time upon our common road to the Unknown Goal . . . yes, and who knows? memories that we shall carry beyond a grave impotent to stifle the one thing immortal—memory.

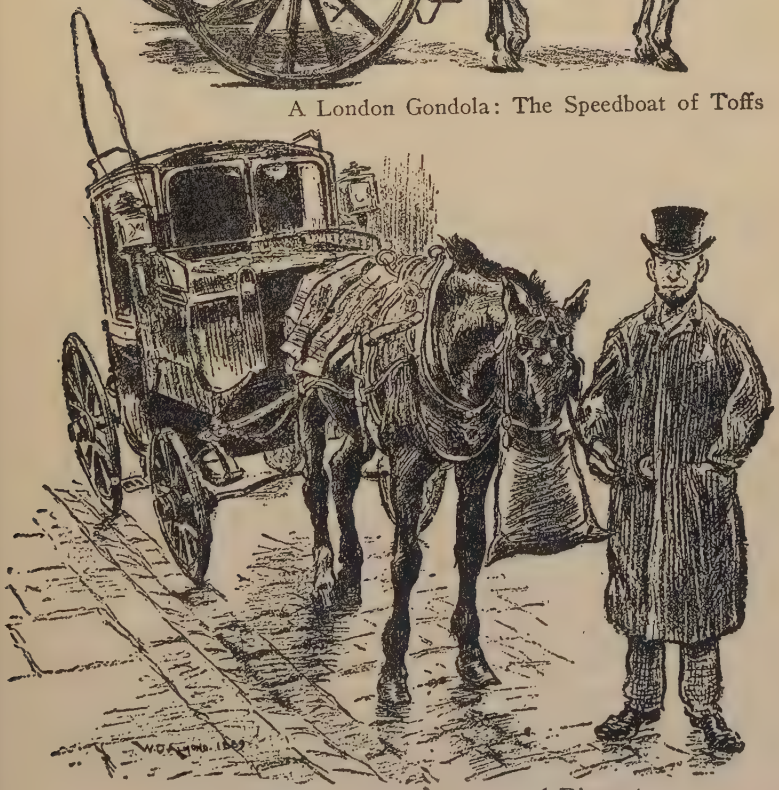
It is by scents and sounds that we most subtly remember. Memory is music-borne and scent-borne.

A scent is the first thing that I remember of old London—the scents of the lilies and roses in the flower shops of the London May. With it, a dream of fair women—the flower girls around the steps of the Royal Exchange and under the Eros which all London called "The Mercury," in Piccadilly Circus, their baskets of flowers dewy before them.

And with this scent blends another, the thing that made possible that first scent—the scent of the horses in the hard



A London Gondola: The Speedboat of Toffs



"A Growler": Slow but Sure and Discreet

From *Sketches of London Cabs and Cabmen*

macadamized streets, for thus does life come out of death, upspringing.

And the next ?

The next, still associated with that Age of Horses, before the noble quadruped whose conquest had marked the first conquest of nature by man, had been dethroned by ignoble petrol, is the hansom cab and the growler and the old-time cabby.

Then a Stoke Newington bus where you collected your own fare into a little box under the driver sitting outside and above, who looked down through his glass to see that you had done so, and so pulled a string to release the coin into the depths below. Behind this, comes a green tin tram pulled by two Bucephaluses from Moorgate Street to Green Lanes, and a toy railway with little yellow engines that ran under the river from the Bank to the Borough in an odour of dead men grown musty—than which no dearer, more intimate scent ever brushed nostril.

Then a vision of the Regent Street curve and the stone angels in the windows of the funeral establishment and, a vision more garish, those other angels, perhaps angels of darkness, perhaps of light—who knows ?—uneasy spirits that moved ceaselessly up and down the broad white paving-stones in the London night.

And after that, quite inconsequent, the days when a blonde and curly David came out of German-Russia to challenge Goliath at the Aquarium and so to become the god of young London—Sandow and Samson to wit. And with this, another memory, also inconsequent and much later, of naked muscled bodies shut within narrow rooms, Tottenham Court Road way, " setting up " muscles and heavy weights for championships.

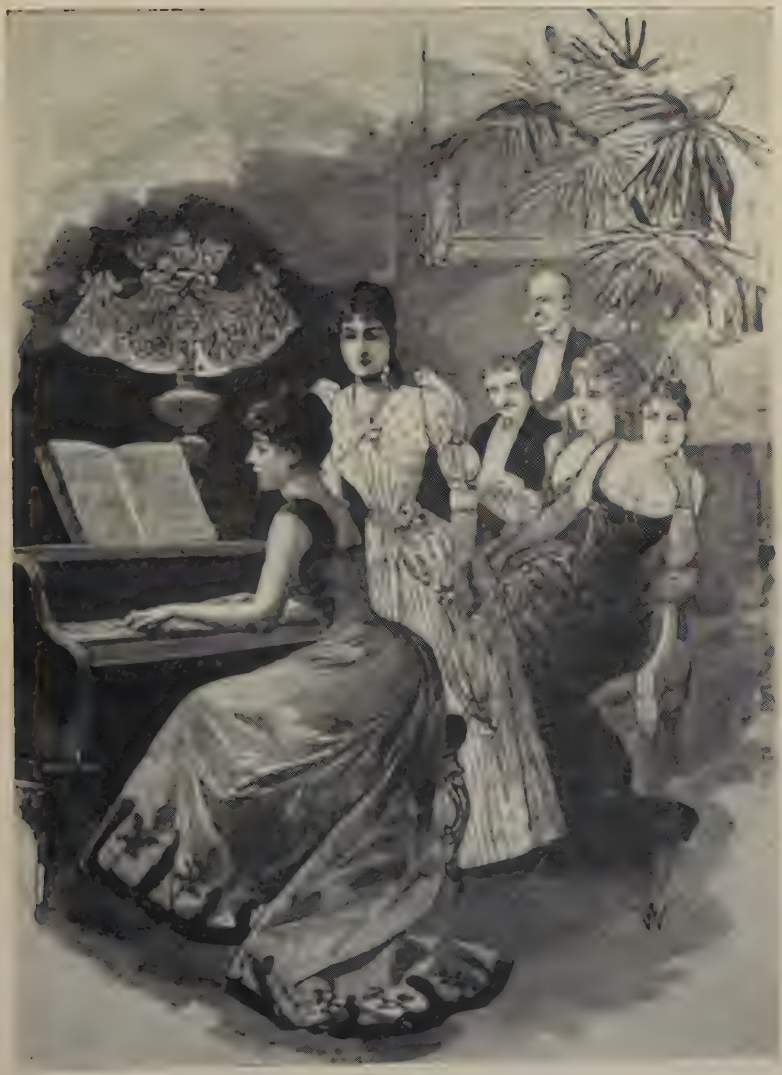
Then, still in that dawn of muscle, the old German gymnasium on a boxing night, with half a hundred of us

crowded within a pillared crevice high up and looking down upon the tiny ring seen as through the small end of a telescope, with its two naked antagonists at this feast of the amateurs, and listening to the smack of glove on flesh. And another night, one of those quiet "official" nights, when a mannikin, Cain by name, is lifted by one of two giant brothers, called Stallybrass as I think, up upon the high bar where he swings like an ape or an angel to win the gymnastic championship. And then, a third memory of the same hallowed hall, a memory of strong men, policemen and guardsmen, straining at the leash, pulling in the tug-of-war against the pick of the London "gymns."

Here come a group of five memories flying, with nothing at all to connect them.

First, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, then epoch-making, now as remote as Queen Anne. When the London nights were murmurous with music and softly scintillant with coloured lights and Kings and Princes, white and brown and black, showed themselves to mildly gloating London as a preliminary to a British Empire that was to cover a world and for its own good.

Then, a tall Chinaman, smiling-sinister, seems to pervade London—his name Li-Hung-Chang, ambassador of that Yellow Peril about which everyone was talking—and before him or after him Prince Chang, on his way to kow-tow to the offended Wilhelm, whose missionaries have been hurt.

Then Nansen and his "Farthest North," and with him for some reason associated a wonderful little Frenchman, whose name has crept into the English language as synonym for exaggeration—but whose exaggerations, like so many other things, now appear to be truths. He crept to us out of the mystery of Australia, and our excited imaginations are full of flying wombats and turtle-horses and mountains of silver. Louis de Rougemont.

Vocal Selections and Elegant Manners

Lastly, a very young gentleman named Alfred Harmsworth, who comes first to shock and then to capture us with a halfpenny daily, though none of us was to foresee the day when a Northcliffe was to hold the world quivering upon his wires.

So follow naturally and inevitably three cameos out of this garden of memories in London's three great halls of music.

A night with all the great ones gathered in the Twilight of the Gods of that grave of voices, the Albert Hall. Nellie Melba is fluting. Plançon's golden baritone in the crepuscule of memory, which can transform even base metal into fine gold, is pouring from the singer as he stands there speckless in white tie, waistcoat and gloves.

An afternoon in the same hall, with Patti coming out, bird-like, twinkling, for the last time to sing: "Comin' through the Rye" to an audience in which criticism has been turned into worship, and the rift already in the lute.

Another turn of the dial, and we are in Covent Garden with Melba and Caruso, flute and 'cello, in "La Traviata," and, later, ere that golden voice had itself become a memory, Caruso in "Carmen," and a Carmen evening with the great Calvé, of all contraltos most glorious. And Tetrazzini comes out of the twilight once again to sweep the circle of the biggest stage in London, air-borne by a note upon which she sways dizzily, and the Italians are shouting in their own way from the five shilling gallery and the grand ladies in the stalls are fainting, languorous, with emotion.

A third picture, this time from the hall in Langham Place, and Sims Reeves, white-gloved and rotund, wins willing tears with his evergreen: "Come into the Garden, Maud."

Or it is John Philip Sousa on the same platform of the Queen's Hall. The stocky bearded figure in the black

frogged coat with its military collar is standing there with the famous band in the hollow of his hand, that small white hand which he holds straight down at his side but twitching from the wrist to let his band conduct itself. There is that smash and crash amazing of " Hands across the Sea " of a time when people still thought of These United States as cousins, though cousins recalcitrant, to be followed by the zip of " The Stars and Stripes for ever ! " ; surely the " swingingest " march that ever was ! There is that pause imposing and those six trombonists have marched down to the middle of the stage to place their slide-trombones to their lips, to slide their way into glory. The kettles are crackling ; the big drums are rolling ; and the six Gabriels are blowing roof and floor together and we are all of us, players and audience alike, marching in one great army to the assault of—is it Hades or Eldorado ? We don't know and we don't care, for we are slightly delirious under the wand of that black magician standing there above.

And hey, presto ! the switch is turned again and we are back in one of the old " Proms," dearest of all London memories to uncounted thousands.

The feeling as we entered our sanctuary with its dim religious lights and the empty amphitheatre of the orchestra ! How we wandered about, not spirits unquiet but spirits anticipatory, letting the peace that passeth understanding sink into our waiting souls.

There is a movement up there in the amphitheatre, and we discover with a thrill sudden as life itself that the man with the tympanums has materialized and from his drums comes a ghostly tap.

Ghosts are floating high above, in a sort of shadow show, out of which come a series of squeaks and screams from the reeds and fiddles as though marionettes were playing together. Then a succession of arpeggios with grunts and

groans from the double-basses and brasses, until the whole orchestra is in torture.

Surcease.

The lights go up and there, elevated above us, has miraculously appeared our high priest and king. He stands there, not a strand of grey yet in that glossy beard and flaunting hair—lovely stuff!—with his bow inimitable. That inclination of gracious suavity that at once honours and is honoured.

Our feelings when Henry Wood was transfigured from mortal man to immortal artist transcend the written word. It was not a conductor passing to his perch. It was beatitude.

Now Henry Wood is firm upon his throne, that first great orchestra so laboriously collected, united and flexible as a first-rate fiddle bow, ranged in semicircles under the hanging lights in that enchantment of crimson, for the Queen's Hall had not then been sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. The prelude to the third act of *Lohengrin* is on our explanatory programme. The bâton swings, and the great choir has burst into symphonic cadence as though the golden gates had opened for one flamed moment to release a glory of sound. Higher, ever higher, the violins tremble, the great trumpets hold their undercurrent of brass, the drums beat in our hearts, and we are afloat in starry regions.

God! for one moment again of that old orchestra inviolate. God! for the "1812" of Tchaïkowsky, with the pealing of bells and the smashing of tympanums and the crash of brass and all the rowdy glory of the worst music the great Russian ever wrote.

Is it young Mark Hambourg who is clawing his triumphal way over the grand, whilst the *quid nuncs* of music look down their noses disapprovingly at the innovation of a clawing hand? And was it not Clara Butt, young Clara Butt,

pealing out those great organ notes from the same platform? and the people once more are walking about in the auditorium and sitting on those steps at the side of the stage and standing to look over the screen of flowers at the artist above.

One last memory from the People's Hall before the pictures of Hambourg, and Kreisler, and Pachmann, and the others, fade:

It is a "Special Grand" Wagner Concert on an April evening of 1906. Arthur W. Payne is the principal violin. And now there is a Master in command, the greatest of them all. His name is Hans Richter.

The great German, bearded, whose very coat breathes music, does something with his wand and the *Götterdämmerung* is about us. *Faust* and *Siegfried*, and the *Meistersinger* pass before us, conjured by that bâton of flame. He stands there, almost immobile, embodiment of restrained energy—but from the point of that thin wand there streams thunder and the sound of waters; the age-worn story of love and death. And then he has passed, a Titan receding in the distance, borne upon the wings of the Valkyries.

And . . . but why go on? What is the use?

For none of us can bring back one beat of that symphony —not of music, but of life as it once could be in old London . . . but it may be that some of us hope, think, we may again hear that music in other climes and under other skies where time is not and only memory is.

The Promenade Concerts were one of the oases of life, oases where we could refresh our souls, weary of the world of every day. But there were others, one of them rhythmic, with music in it, too.

It was green, as oasis should be, the oasis of the green cloth with the click of the ivory, cool, refreshing to the ear, in the solemn hush of Thurston's. What a train of ghosts appear as one looks down *that* corridor of memory!

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The Passing of the Horse

Hackney (*to Shire Horse*). "Look here, Friend Dobbin, I'll be shod if they won't do away with us altogether some of these days!"

John Roberts, "King John," passing from the throne where for so long he had reigned unchallenged. Pressing on his august heels, Dawson and Stevenson and Melbourne Inman the "chess-player" come and pass in days before men had thought of the static subtleties of modern billiards, and all-round play was the thing. For those were the days of five-cushion cannons and the obscene "anchor" was not.

Or we are watching a fair-haired Australian boy advance to the table, cue in hand, to do his magic. His name is George Gray.

Within half a dozen strokes, he has coaxed the balls to his bidding. The object-white he tucks away comfortably in a pocket or under a cushion. The red, magnetized, drops a few inches this side of the centre line. And then, as the score mounts insidious to the four figure break, the white drops in mechanically off the red into the centre pockets, first to the right hand, and then to the left, automatic as clockwork.

Click-click. His opponent looks on, hypnotized. Click-click. The crowd look on, hypnotized. Not a word is spoken in those days of spacious repose. For one is taking part in ceremonial. A chair creaks, and one seems to hear the unuttered protests from the spectators. It is sacrilege. The control of the ivory spheres has come to us to typify the control of systems celestial. One feels with reverential instinct that the Almighty Player conjures the galaxy of the Milky Way into their positions in some such manner.

And when the break is finished, a sigh of souls confessed goes up. The applause, softened, awed, is the great Amen.

Perhaps it is the green cloth, perhaps it is nothing at all, that brings vagrant two other strays out of the London void.

A score of thousand of us are standing outside the grey compromise of the National Liberal Club to gaze at a green light and a red light climbing neck and neck upwards through the night. The two lights are the English challenger

and the American Cup Defender, and the little red light passes steadily upwards like the skimming dish that the yacht *Columbia* is, to leave the green light and the first of the *Shamrocks* in the depths, and with it, our hearts.

And somewhere, in the middle of all this, moving like a dark shadow in the sunlight against the green velvet of Lord's, is a slight brown figure, with silken shirt and silken wrists. A flick of the wrists and Ernest Jones' express, right on the middle peg, is travelling with the speed of light towards the leg boundary, and Australia, 'raptured, holds its breath. A burly bearded figure, generally pervading, but already dimming like some giant ghost receding in the distance, watches from the other end. "Ranji" and "W.G." or, to give them their full titles: Prince Ranjitsinhji and Doctor W. G. Grace.

And Tom Richardson of the steel-sprung shoulders is coming back his inch from the off like a hurricane blast. Or C. B. Fry's barn-door, the bat without a hole, is wearing down the Australian attack and "Down Under" is down indeed. Stanley Jackson, the cap with the white rose well pulled down over the eyes, once again is making the long journey from the Lord's pavilion to the wickets and, clean bowled first ball by Worrall, is making that dreadful nightmare journey back again. And Hirst is swinging 'em down to leg as he bounces off the green sward like an animated cannon-ball. Or it is Wilfred Rhodes, last man in, coming out that day of dread when the Test shivered on razor-edge, to steal with George those last few runs that tipped the scales for England. And our eyes shine again and the green grass dances for all that the sun is sinking and the shadows lengthening.

Two other pictures from that time stray haphazard into memory as I write.

Julius Seeth, the giant German, leading his troupe of

' forest-bred lions " into the old Hippodrome when it was yet circus and even before the stage which was to turn it into variety had thrust in its red nose amid the motley. A great figure of a man, good-humoured in the German way, his uniformed breast, broad as a door, mailed with medals. And little Marceline, greatest of silent drolls, is making his head over heels run along the edge of the velvet ring, or is doing his stationary gallop by the side of the benevolent bald-headed ringmaster, his foil. And now he is crushing together his line of attendants, plus the bald-headed one, to make that incredible somersault over the whole boiling. And Macnow, the Russian giant, nearly ten feet high, makes his prodigious melancholy apparent at the opening of the high curtains at the entrance and straddles the ring to shake hands with us in the balcony.

Another picture—this time from the Coliseum, a stone's throw away.

From behind the tremendous curtain comes the roar of distant thunder which, as the turn-table of the stage completes its circling, has fallen into a distant rumble. And so there steals to us through the purr of the balalaikas the " Volga Boat Song," the first time that song was to haunt the ears of a London audience. After it, the croon of " Bright shines the Moon " and " Sun in the Sky, stop shining," and the daintiness of " Melodka-Melodka." For the Czar of all the Russias still balanced his crown and sceptre, Siberia was stern fact, and the " Czar's own Balalaika Orchestra " has come to town, solitary pioneer of artistic Russia, of Karsavinas and Pavlovas, and the strange beauty of the Russian Ballet. And the Red Flag had not yet flaunted itself over the Double-Eagle, and Lenin was not.

For the last time, the scene changes in this kaleidoscope of memory of that old London, and we are back at a Covent Garden Ball. The boxes are filled with the beauties of

variety and the "legitimate," trying to look as like themselves as they can encompass and we are dancing demoniacally to Godfrey's band upon a floor which seems to be air-hung. Inside that barriered circle where life, if anæmic, yet runs strong, I am dancing, now the Lancers and now the quadrilles, to find myself opposite a *vis-à-vis* discreetly coy, who shakes a wicked foot in my face and over my head, for it is not all *bon ton* at the Garden. I have danced forty-eight dances, including the extra barn-dance and "the coat off your back" of the merry-go-round in the Lancers, not to mention the final gallop, which has turned my shirt-front into a concertina, has sweated the mask off my face (we masked, some of us, to hide our innocence), and has left me exhausted but ecstatic. We have had our guinea supper somewhere upstairs and the band is playing, of course, "The Blue Danube," which runs through all this story of a vanished London.

The grand parade has taken place and the diamond tiara has been awarded to "Church and Stage," for those two had embarked upon coy flirtation—a gentleman—or was it a lady?—one half of whom was arrayed as a ballet dancer with frilled skirts and fleshings and the other as a curate in regulation black coat and choker, thus bearing out symbolically the popular belief implicit that a curate was only half a man. We have formed into two long lines to watch this solemn strutting, and as the small hours peep in, greyly, upon us, we make our way outside where the giant doorkeeper calls: "Hansom!" or "Four-wheeler!" as the case may be. And so we find ourselves, rag, tag and bob-tail, dear meretricious ladies with peroxided hair fluffy as angels' wings, and wicked red ones, and masked unknowns who we hope are the countesses they say they are. Tall blonde Johnnies with hair parted smoothly in the middle, monocled and coat-tailed. What we rather suspect as

A Big Night at "The Garden"

country parsons, " regular lads," up for a night, and " actresses " in quotation marks. Artists and butchers and men-about-town all turning in the maze in which we are all trapped, prisoners for life—the maze that is life itself.

The sun is coming up as we cross the Strand, to pass over a Waterloo Bridge with not a shadow of the motor that is one day to crowd upon it—only a solitary crawling hansom that prowls the length of the bridge, and so we watch the sun lift itself red and bloody over a London that is still a smoke-palled London, pale ghosts surprised by the dawn.

III

WHEN THE WORLD WAS VERY YOUNG

THE throb-throb of Dan Godfrey's band playing "The Blue Danube." Coloured festoons of glass lamps in the soft, fluttering innocence of blue and red and green in the middle distance. The faint satisfying "tang" of London in the air before petrol had replaced horse. The roar of the "Switch-Back" in the far away. Ladies and gentlemen—there were no "men" or "women" in those days—some of the older ladies still in dolmans, that ghastly glassy dignity of a day when beads and bombazine was the shining armour of respectability, and bonnets, scant half-ovals tied by a superfluity of silken bow under the chin, or, if you were very saucy, under the ear. Some of these latter are equipped with "improvers" bunching them well out at the back waist-line and giving to their skirts a gentle swaying movement, infinitely soothing. The younger beauties in pancake hats and plumes and holding genteelly between finger and thumb, parasols with necks like giraffes, and with neatly buckled belts about their constricted middles in an age when female griffins wrote to the papers:

> Sir,—I have eight daughters: Ethel, Mabel, Jane, Fanny, Louisa, Maud, Prunella and Gertrude, none of whom have I permitted to have a waist larger than sixteen inches. . . .

And we, poor devils, outsiders, standing on the very edge of the last row of lamps and gazing into paradise—in other

A Most Fetching Trousseau of 1893

(The second creation from the left pictures the Skating Costume *de rigueur*)

words, into the "Welcome," later to be known as the "Travellers'" Club, where indeed there was no welcome if you were not one of "the la-di-das."

You took the train from Mansion House to Earls Court on a sultry evening of August, and when near your last gasp, *and* enjoying it, you walked giddily out at the Warwick Road exit of a platform innocent of sweet shops, although I imagine you could get "Taddy's Myrtle Grove" or "Eightpenny Upmans" if you felt very much that way.

You walked down a long glass-covered tunnel, having about you a delicious feeling of royalty and covered private ways, and then down some stairs, upon the rises of which the first staircase advertisements are one day to show themselves. And then—why then you were in a palace of "The Thousand and One Nights."

The buildings of the Earls Court Exhibition—for that is where you are—were sumptuous in stucco and gilt. They were much better than the real thing, for all the "exhibitions," whether nominally reposing on "fisheries" or "health" or what not, had a flavour of the Oriental, with that sensuous all-pervading perfume which was the very essential quintessence of Earls Court and to catch which to-day is once more to be memory-haunted. There was a subtle, harem-like meretriciousness about Earls Court which in my lifetime at least has never had echo. Those things, like youth, only come once.

Saucy scented houris (a maiden in very red hair, Turkish trousers and turn-up shoes had already stolen my heart on the first landing) came up to you as bold as brass and squirted tropical scents into your eyes and especially into your ears (oh! that exquisite titillation of the interior membrane). So were you initiated. Sloe-eyed damosels out of the Orient, but who, I am now inclined to think, really came out of Clapham Junction, threw languorous

glances at you and made you blush to the soles of your feet, and if you were not awfully careful, despite the fact that you were a male, you would find a glittering necklace hung about your neck by one of these Turkish Delights, a " real platinum-gold " bracelet slipped over your wrist, and a patent eight-day watch, that usually went for five minutes, stuck into your pocket.

Once they were on you—why, they were bought and you were " sold."

" Whatever else we see, we *must* see the Performing Fleas ! "

You always said that first of all, for the Performing Fleas were hardy perennials, whether in the earlier exhibitions when Buffalo Bill was London's Pride, or the later ones of Great Wheels and water chutes.

I am the only living survivor from that period who has never seen the interesting insects push their chariots and make love and, generally, act like lunatics—that is, like humans. Not even the seductive inscription :

> Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em,
> And little fleas have lesser fleas—and so, ad infinitum.

could part me from the shilling which was the entrance fee. Had I not already paid nearly that to get to Earls Court ? was it not a " bob " to go in ? and how could any man in his senses visit Earls Court without having what the old lady called " half a mile of danger for sixpence "—that is the toboggans, or, as they were known, the " switch-back " ? (There was a water chute without any water at this time, for the real water chutes were to come much later, but it lacked . . . well you shall see what it lacked.)

You climbed an incredible height into the air—it must have been all of twenty eet, for the altitudes of the Scenic Railway had not yet been envisaged. You sat cheek by

jowl in the toboggan with some total stranger to whom, unless he were a lady, and sometimes even then, half-way down you clung closer than any brother, and whoop! you were off.

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Down you hurtled like the rush of bird through blue air, and sailormen (were they real sailormen I wonder?) did unimaginable feats of avoidance on the runways as you swooped past. A check, with your heart which had run up into your throat now dropping to your boots as though the infernal thing were playing "cup and ball" with you; a giddy pause, and whoop! you were off again and then, just as you had given up the ghost, a swift slide down a slope slippery as sin and you daped over the Pit, a jump that catches you in that Pit—the pit of the stomach, another slide, drop and buck, and then . .

Why, then, a long slow rise, "grateful and comforting" as the cocoa advertisements you have been reading, and you are safe in the arms of a big, hairy-breasted, polygamous person who received all, men, women and children, into his capacious bosom and so you were at the haven where you would be.

Dan is throbbing somewhere in the farther distance—"tumpy-tumptety-tumpety-tum" and with the lights swaying about you, you gather that it is a waltz—*the* waltz of the most crackerjack regiment in the British Army: *Shine out, thou golden stars!*

You are back at the bar of paradise, at the "Welcome," wondering how you got there, with the throb-throb of the scarlet and gold players still in your ears—surely the best band then or since to draw music out of an August night with a great red moon of passion rising above a line of white wall. Dan waves his hand and you are filled with faint longings to take one of those exclusive women inside the "Welcome" into your arms, and you would say, if you were

but ten years older, for that song is not yet: "Love me and the world is mine."

If heaven could teach the earth, and between them there is but a step, it would be to hold in the waltz one of those ladies with their swooshy skirts and dainty high angular shoulders with V waists set deep into the hip-socket, whilst Dan Godfrey played you to sleep. But that is unimaginably improper, and when the time comes that we can do these things, we don't want to do them—which is life.

You find as you move away disheartened with yourself and with life, and especially with those unattainable beauties, that someone has attached a big blue balloon to the button of your skimpy-collared coat, whilst over either wrist is the elastic of a spinning disc which revolves as you meet your wrists and part them again. On it is an advertisement of either "Wasmuth's Corn Plasters" or "Lamplough's Pyretic Saline"—you cannot quite remember.

You also discover that these have been, so to speak, "thrown in" with a half a pound of genuine Turkish Delight straight from the palace of Abdul the Damned, that is the Sultan, in Constantinople. The "drum" bears the cabalistic signs of the Turkish language, so you cannot doubt it. All the same, it has cost you a "tanner," or sixpence.

Everything was "free" in the Earls Court of that day. Prizes were pressed on you at every step by mincing but minatory females who wore Swami dresses with entire indifference and Whitechapel accents. Judge of your feelings, already mellowed by sprays of delicious "Jockey Club" or "Cherry Blossom" or "Hasu-no-Hana" or "Ful-Nana" and rapidly becoming oriental, when you are approached by lovely woo-man in Turkish drawers (a word forbidden in that day save in this solitary connection) with dusky hair (henna had not yet appeared), heavy-lidded eyes (with one or two wrinkles underneath, but no matter), who,

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The Earls Court Exhibition

noting our extreme youth, says: "Come orn, Bertie—buy one—be a sport and give the girls a treat!" It was devastating.

For the world was very young then, and we were very young, and all women were inaccessible impeccable houris from the other side of paradise. And we could not bear to wake up.

And all the time. the band is throbbing like a great heart out there in the blue. It is playing: "In the Gloaming" and "White Wings."

The scent of roasted popcorn, the *pièce de résistance* of Earls Court from the great days of the Wild West Show, is in the air. You buy threepennyworth of the sticky mess and eat it with mixed feelings. For the truth is, despite your soulfulness, you are frightfully hungry and would give that same soul for a chop or steak.

But you know that nobody in Earls Court can get anything to eat unless he or she is very very rich, or a member of that Welcome Club in which the shaded candlelights are showing across the emerald sward. There is nothing but Mr. Bertram, of whom you know just one thing—that His Royal Highness Edward Prince of Wales always asks him for the chop and glass of brandy which is his favourite lunch.

You don't want brandy—but, oh God! for a chop.

In vain does the girl with the gyroscopes make the little spinning wheels do their magic under the blue and yellow of the bobbing gas-lights, so much kindlier than the hard white electric lights to follow. In vain does she make them defy all known laws of gravity as they climb their strings one after the other. Louis Brennan, of whom all London is talking, the young inventor who has come out of the Irish West to blow up battleships and their 110-ton guns with the Brennan torpedo and who has a gyroscopic railway along which men are to travel at one hundred miles an hour on a single rail, in

that vacuous moment when belly is lord of life, is as remote as the pretty spinning toys which are the simulacra of the Brennan gyroscope . . . and, anyhow, everyone still knows that the Lord never meant men to travel faster than they do from King's Cross to Grantham any more than He meant them to go up into the air like birds—and even the former is flying in His face at fifty miles an hour. . . .

For your soul is back in the Welcome, which, by memory-magic, has now become the Travellers. But you want to get away from it all as Lucifer may have wanted to get away from Heaven. It is the way of all banned souls.

So you find yourself, without transition, ten years afterwards though it be, sitting altogether alone in a tiny compartment, lifting slowly over the subdued flare of a London which to the London of to-day is as a candle to an arc-light. The great red moon shines like a pasteboard planet in the lower heavens, and you are being translated from it up towards the fainted stars and skies of smoky blue in the Great Wheel. You can see the silver chord of the river as you are lifted starward, and you feel as Elijah must have felt when transported to Heaven in the fiery chariot. Away in the distance lies the sea—you know that by the guiding silver thread of the Thames—and beneath and about you is crawling and squirming and beating the night life of London, coming up to you through the stardust like a great pulse.

The big blue balloon which is still tied to your buttonhole has something of the stars in it. In its surface which you smooth with reflective finger-tips, there turn yellow and green and white lights and you are alone in space with your God—for God was then much closer than now to the friendly earth.

And when you begin to descend earthwards again, it is Lucifer cast forth from Heaven. And you step from your

car with a sigh that comes out of your boots and when you go to bed that night you are soaring heavenward over London, the sleeping city, like some disembodied spirit, on your cheeks the waftings of wings. . . .

To recover, you have sat on one of the green-backed chairs near the bandstand under a blue canopy of sky in which the golden lamps of the stars are hanging strangely low once more. The band is pulsing: "Oh honey, my honey!" Near you, a girl is murmuring the refrain:

> Oh honey, my honey! it's a dark and stilly night,
> And only the stars can see.
> Won't you wander through the grove in the pale moonlight,
> While I whisper my love to thee?
> You shall nestle to my breast, and dream awhile and rest,
> Whilst we listen to the music—to the music far away.

Far away . . . far away. . . . How far away it all seems now. For the world was very young then.

IV

A NIGHT UP WEST

You and I find ourselves at the end of a long day in " the City," a day which began at nine sharp and finished at six, in the mood for gentle relaxation. Not for " a night out." Just for " a night Up West." There was a difference.

There is a suggestion of fog in the January night as we board the two-horse bus at the Bank, to clamber perilously to the seats on either side of the driver, where there is room for half a dozen " specials," disdaining the knife-board on top, where two lines of top-hats sit solemnly back to back. Our Jehu, rolled and strapped into his horse-rug, is muffled up to the eyes in what looks like two suits of woollen underclothing and three coats, the lot covered by the box cloth and five-shilling pearl buttons of a day when " cloth " was " cloth " and the blue Melton could still be obtained. In his buttonhole is a bouquet of Parma violets, his hat is the dwarfed hat of the John Bull of the posters, and he flings up his whip with a gesture indescribable if he recognizes us, as of course he does not. For we are very *very* young, and we know it.

The peak-nosed Cockney on the monkey-board behind rings his bell, exchanges a few terse remarks with another gent on another monkey-board, and we are off.

Instead of taking the circular route up Cheapside and round to the left in a circumnavigation of Saint Paul's, we amble past Mappin & Webb's along Queen Victoria Street, keep to the right and past the cathedral, and so reach

Eugene Sandow "The Strongest Man in the World"

The Old Knife-Board Bus

"Charing Crawss" at an inclusive charge of twopence, afterwards to be reduced to one penny.

On the other side of the driver are two stockbrokers, *not* "outsiders." The real toffs of the Stock Exchange wear a young bouquet in their buttonhole often grown boastfully in their own gardens, and are the only people privileged to the enormity of a lounge coat with a top hat. They are frightfully jealous of their privileges are the stockbroking Johnnies, frightfully superior, and frightfully sporting. And they eat fruit like monkeys, because the stockbroking stomach has to be kept in order and at all costs.

The Strand is full of gents in toppers and bowlers who are hurrying home to Putney and Clapham and Tooting by horse-bus, or, if they live in the awful respectability of North London, by tram from Moorgate Street. The "Underground" with its flavour of the day before yesterday swallows what is left, afterwards to vomit them up through the sulphurous reek of the Inner Circle, as it pants its way round London.

Each driver and each conductor seems to be shouting himself purple in his attempt to cajole or force the public upon his particular bus. Some of these buses are "pirates," which don't give you tickets and which, manned by dark buccaneerish individuals, of knotted "Belcher" and jowl unshaven, ask you thruppence from the Bank with cut-throat *insouciance* and threaten to "aht" you if you refuse to pay. We of course avoid these gentlemen, for we are very knowing even though we are not much more than boys. "Not for me, says Joseph!" the catchword of that day.

We have before us this night of January of the 'nineties a perfect feast of delight.

We can either visit the Aquarium, by the side of which the chaste Imperial Theatre, rebuilt, and with Lily Langtry as lessee, is one day to stand and where to-day Nonconform-

ity has its headquarters ; or we can, oh joy ! go to the Moore and Burgess (Mr. Burgess has just come in to join Mr. " Pony" Moore) Minstrels at the St. James's Hall ; or, more excitation, we can be thrilled at Maskelyne and Cook's Egyptian Hall of Mystery. They all cost exactly a shilling or humble " bob," unless we " go regardless " and pay—what was it—half a crown or five shillings ? But our money never ran to that, so we cannot remember.

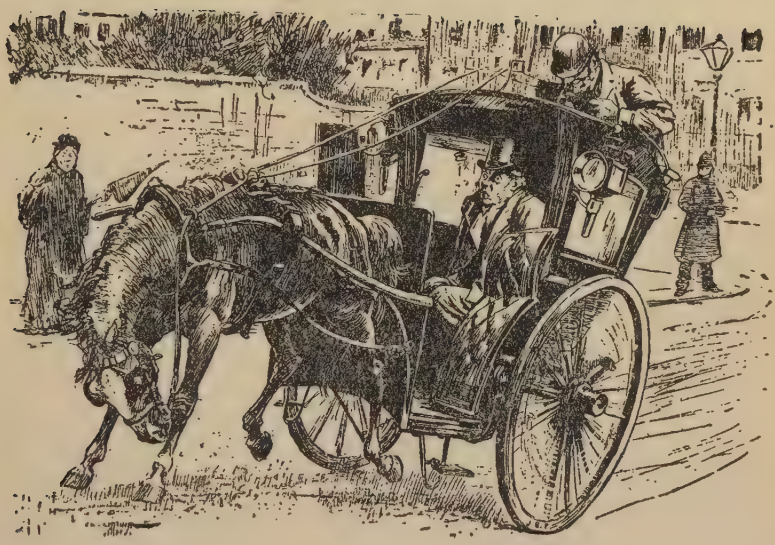
The theatres, for this night of gaiety, we bar.

First, however, you, being reckless, suggest that we shall " have a tiddley round the corner." And so we find ourselves, I, gently protestant as becomes a staunch tee-totaller and one-time member of the Band of Hope, and only dallying with the yellow lusciousness of Cantrell & Cochrane's when lemonade was lemonade, inside the bar of a cosy little pub at the back of Leicester Square.

There are some rather fierce-looking females there, with very bright but very tired eyes, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, with their feathers and " pinkings " done at the local undertaker's and with their tightly laced in waists. When they drink, they do so apologetically, lifting their veils and lowering them again quickly. For Mrs. Grundy is still strong in Piccadilly.

You and I, in the rosy afterglow of lemonade and Bass, still together and much invigorated, review our resources once more. And you, being of the dashing sort, assert in the spirit of George Mozart's classic to be : " Two port wines and I'd push a cab over ! "

There is, it is true, that kangaroo at the Aquarium which is the talk of London. That is temptation. But, on the other hand, there is the Alhambra, and, as I think, the smack of Little Tich's long boots and young Marie Lloyd's arch sauciness. There is also, if we seek the real thing and don't care if it snows, the old Canterbury across the water, just



A Buckjumperish Sensation

(*At the rumor that some of Buffalo Bill's Broncos have been bought by the Cab Proprietors of London*)

Cabby. "Sit still, Sir! This ain't nothin' to wot 'e *can* do. You'll see 'im turn 'ead over 'eels presently!"

the other side of Westminster Bridge—but that is rather forbidden ground and we are both so very young that it is more a name than an actuality. And I forgot, there is of course J. L. Graydon's old Middlesex in Drury Lane where the shows are said to have a sultry tendency. For " the old Mo," or old Mogul, as it was known, was the grandma of the modern leg-revue.

Madame Tussaud's, up Baker Street way, where Sherlock Holmes is about to talk to " my dear Watson," has a certain sinister attraction because of the " Chamber of Horrors " ; but when all is said and done, it is more a place for maiden aunts from the country than for two smart young city gents with no flies on them. For the distinction between " town " and " country " in those days was fierce and peculiar. " City slim or country fat ? " We, of course, are city slims, although I only came out of the County Waterford the day before yesterday and you out of Essex the day before that.

The Crystal Palace, at least, is quite out of it—no class. That is more of a place for a Saturday afternoon when you haven't any cricket, despite the meretricious joys of the antediluvians (but perhaps they came later ?) and Brock's fireworks : long may they rain !

I, being cursed with a religious strain and dazzled by the possibilities of the night, am inclined to plump for a big Salvation Army revival now rocketing down Westminster way. For there will be the rolling choruses, the " volleys " on the drums, the brass of trumpets like to that of Gabriel, and, supreme titillation, " the penitent form," with " The General " himself, hook-nosed and hawk-eyed, in command. Quietly, in my own mind, I veto that because I am very much afraid of being convicted of sin and so of spoiling an evening's entertainment.

We are both pretty decent fellows and so have been

looking in some disgust at an exuberant gentleman in the last stages of a "gin-crawl," a popular pastime in a day of grey amusement, when even decent men drank heavily.

For the drinking of the water of nepenthe, men usually chose a Saturday afternoon and evening, so as to be able to devote the proper time to it, with Sunday to sleep it off. Starting at the old "Lounge" in Leicester Square, the "crawler" by a series of gradations passed from pub to pub and from inebriation partial to inebriation entire, winding up the end of a perfect day at Bow Street—where he never meant to find himself, and, all the time, drinking "mother's ruin."

The Boxing Kangaroo, plus puritanism, decides the day and so we vote for the Aquarium.

As we come down Whitehall, we pass the Guards' Bank detachment marching staccato fashion to their nightly vigil over the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. They move like wooden soldiers in their busbies, scarlet, and brass, led by an impeccable officer, slim-waisted and with a sort of red sash about him, and they look as they have looked from the Crimea and will look to the end—men cast in heroic mould who don't know it. And I think, as I watch them swing past, pale ghosts of yesterday, that a little drummer carries a lantern in his hand—but we have just seen the changing of the guard at the Palace and perhaps we are a trifle muddled.

Yet for all this pomp and circumstance, we have seen a blushing barmaid in our pub refuse to serve a soldier of the Queen because he was in uniform, for the British Army is not quite respectable. Even the theatres will not always admit Tommy unless he changes his clothes.

Across the road, the lantern is shining to show to an awed world that the "tried, trusted and true" are on guard and

that all is right with an empire about which nobody knows anything, or for that matter, cares too much.

But a heavy fog is enwreathing the shining face of Big Ben and is steadily settling into our lungs, so that we cough and cough again. The bobby on point duty waves a generous paw and stops the blasphemous buses, so that we just glimpse the yellow teeth and white foam of the horses as they are pulled back almost on their haunches. And there is the bare curved span of the Aquarium before us.

We pass through the turnstiles of the huge, barn-like place, to lay down our humble bobs. We pass, somewhat like ghosts ourselves, up a long passage where we see the most anæmic fish that ever stuck glassy eye and pale gill against green glass, staring at us, and, doubtless, pitying us. Then we are in a wilderness of board and seat, with wide galleries running round the square vault and with nothing on them or in them.

The house, as I think, is lit by gas, for electricity has not yet come in from the street to keep us on tenterhooks by its crazy flutterings, and, as I also think, at this period. Succi, the fasting gentleman, like Zazel, the Human Cannon-ball, have not yet matured from the circumambient, the latter to be fired out of a huge gun. But it is not so long after, I imagine, that a tank with four feet of water in it into which a dare-devil is to dive from a tiny platform hanging giddily aloft under the naked roof, is to be set almost in the middle of the floor before the stage. And all these things, in some mysterious way, are, at this time, associated in some form or other with SCIENCE, that new, strange, and as devoted millions think, false god to whom, at this time, we are all beginning at least to incline our heads. That an attenuated gentleman can go without food for forty days; that a lovely lady can be used as live shell; and that still a third can fall a hundred feet without breaking

his—or was it "her?"—neck, is in some way, not clearly explained, of vital import to science and to humanity at large.

How shockingly, utilitarianly moral we all were!

The tinny orchestra strikes up "Daisy Bell" as we enter and then, becoming slightly delirious, bursts into "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay." The seats have a scattering of gents in check suits and bowler hats and with very very wide trousers and tightly compressed boots, varnished with M. de Guiche's "Celebrated" or polished with Messrs. Day & Martin's not yet waterproofed. The ladies with them are heterogeneous Hebes, but all are generously feathered.

Ma is there with Pa from the Mile End Road, and there is Aunty Jane from the country looking already faintly shocked, but I don't think there are any "kids."

Up goes the curtain on a stage that stands out in disconcerting fashion from the bare walls, and we sit excited through the red-nosed comedians and the bounteous soubrette, awaiting the Kangaroo.

The orchestra strikes up a Ta-ra-ra-ra! as a useful looking "professor" in navy blue tights and tan boxing gloves comes forward "to bespeak our kind attention," whilst he expatiates upon the miracle we are about to witness and the calm appeal of the fact that "it is all done by kindness," for we are terribly sentimental in the 'nineties except where humans are concerned. He then gracefully retires, to be followed almost at once by a gentlemanly-looking kangaroo with boxing gloves on his foreshortened paws.

This mild-looking gentleman can, with a single rip of his powerful hind legs, disembowel the Professor, as the latter has carefully explained, but, rather to our disappointment, he does not do so. Instead, he makes a series of short, lolloping lunges towards his trainer, giving and taking punishment with an indifference that does him credit.

Lottie Collins: "The Holy Terror" of *Ta-Ra-Ra Boom-De-Ay* Fame

The crowd stamp and howl in their own way, especially when the Professor assures us once again that " it is all done by kindness." We are, despite the damp mustiness of the Noah's Ark, frightfully excited by it all. You imagine we can get a drink, if we wish, somewhere behind there in the interval. But we have both at our last public house been more than a little overwhelmed by the fuzzy-haired blonde with the velvet band around her plump neck, knotted coyly under her left ear, and so we decide to wait—somewhat to my disappointment, for I am dying for another Cantrell & Cochrane.

When we come out into the yellow, we find that the " London particular " has settled down for the night to take old Cockaigne into its keeping. From out the heart of it, the arc-lights splutter in ghastly blues with a hissing noise inimical as we try to find a place for a drink so as to wind-up the evening with suitable dissipation, for eating is out of the question unless you have a lot of the " spondulix." The poor man in the London of that day was not supposed to have a stomach, only a gullet.

Still subcutaneously excited by the kangaroo, we part, you for the Underground to Hammersmith and I to catch the North London to Queen's Road, Finsbury Park, having had the evening of our young lives.

" So long, old boy ! "

" Toodle-oo, old chap, see you to-morrow."

V

WHEN WOMAN CAME INTO "THE CITY"

FOUR foot eleven of boy in a snowy linen jacket, a square-peaked brass-plated cap, and a dustpan with the handle incurved towards him, is running on all fours like a monkey under the noses of the horses, like a hundred other small boys. He sweeps as he runs. He is the hall-mark of the days of hansoms and horses. He is the scavenger lad.

Each hour, he dances with death over the shining macadam of the city streets. Each hour, he performs acrobatic feats incredible before a rush of oncoming horses, dodging under the wheels of a bus that looks like a stage-coach stood on end, to reach the other side breathless and triumphant as he empties his dustpan into the iron stand with the funny little tube that hangs like an icicle of iron. But his footwork is nothing to his tongue-work.

He asks a purple-faced bus-driver "if his mother knows he's out?" carries on a bit of smart cross-talk with a youngish hansom-driver—a very fine cockbird indeed, in box cloth and a bunch of violets with a white bowler resting on one eyebrow, where he perches on his dickey; cheeks a bobby; and, in between, to fill up time, plays a solo upon the bottom of his dustpan drum-fashion with his brush handle; whistles "The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo"; and dances the sailor's hornpipe.

As we walk down Threadneedle Street towards the Strand this day of the 'nineties, we find a world decorous and ordered, with every bobby in his place and knowing

it and every city man strapped into a frock coat one size too small and let into a pair of trousers two sizes too large, for, as I write, the Oxford bags are already thirty years old. There are collars—four-inchers—that lap the whole way round with the neat 4s. 6d. black silk tie ("all cut from the Spitalfields Square") sometimes restrained by black-headed pins which the wearers, with incredible difficulty and as incredible profanity, have forced through the stiffness of pure linen. In the winter time, this leads to bloody fingers and language of the same—but, fortunately, we are in the early summer, when the scent that flirts our nostrils from the flower girls in front of the Royal Exchange induces virtue and balmy reflection.

There are top-hats, some of the more ancient, shaped like a wedge, that have to be seen to be believed, for each one of them is a shining mirror to reflect the virtue beneath and is sent to the hatter's each morning to reflect it.

The smart city shops are filled with bargains that tell us we are dreaming—as we are, for are we not of the twentieth century still to dawn? There are, despite the weather, in the window of a tailor who in a world of unhurry has yet to learn that spring is here, exquisite blue Melton overcoats "to measure" at two guineas; and if Melton still were made, you might get the same to-day at ten guineas—and then again, you might not. A velvet collar is the whole of an incredible five shillings extra. There are City men's "lounges" to order at three guineas to four guineas and the West End clothiers are doing the same suit, "all pure wool with pure wool linings" at 37s. 6d.

If you are a clerk, you wear a blue lounge suit, "Navy serge, all indigo-dyed," with a bowler which has run the gamut from the proverbial "tom-tit on a round of beef" to the "curly-curlies" at present the vogue. If you are

an employer, "on your own," you wear the frock coat, which I am still inclined to think is perhaps the most graceful of the garments of male hideousness, and which is sure to come once more to its own in the whirligig of time. And, clerk or no clerk, you beg, borrow, or steal a "topper," for if you buy it, it runs you into one guinea if you want one of the best, although, there is an inferior quality at 15s. 6d., much affected by office-boy adolescence. For the silk hat means a certain "five bob a week rise." It is the insignia of success.

The morning coat is still comparatively rare in these streets of the 'nineties—and the great disadvantage about it is that, like the "frock," of course you cannot smoke a pipe with it.

The morning coat has passed through various stages. Some of the city gents about us, wearing it, are sucking at but an infrequent cigarette, which, however, has the advantage of going with any coat, even the formal frock, and which, on the stage, is reserved to villainy as the pipe is the prerogative of virtue. The pipe, however, is still king, with the cigar for the swell.

Some of these "mornings" have tails which cling like the wing cases of a beetle to the waists and nether parts of the wearers, finishing at the bend of the knee. Some, however, the very smart Johnnies, have their tails coming nearly half-way down the calf, and look rather like out-of-work waiters. But all wear black or grey mixture for the coat, whether frock or morning, and all wear grey striped or dark mixture nondescript trousers.

A few of the ultra-ultras have "bandana" ties, yellow horrors with red erysipelas spots; they wear their striped cashmere trousers turned up about three inches; and their buttoned boots are varnished, not polished, every morning of their sweet young lives. Over their arms, even on this

"Bloomers" and Divided Skirts.

fine day, they carry umbrellas, bamboo-handled with gold or silver studs, with which, if a summer shower should fall, they seek to protect the finery beneath. And for gloves, they wear lavender or pale yellow kid. But these are the "bloods"; gay dogs; "up to snuff and a bit over, *I* believe you, my boy."

For canes, cherry wood sticks with enormous silver bands and handle-ends are the fashion, unless you go in for a wang-hee or thin yellow bamboo, with which you strike your trousers smartly from time to time to show that you are all there. And, of course, what with the impervious vests of thick white linen, the strait waistcoat of a shirt that has a front and cuffs like armour plate (the soft shirt is yet unknown except by "low workmen"), and the thick woollen under-shirt and underpants which all males wore in an age when the hygienic luxury of linen underwear was as unguessed as the living picture—every male there walks about in a bath of perspiration. For Mother and "wifie" still ruled the home—and when they said "wool," they meant "wool." Some of us even have all-wool linings in our waistcoats and coats, and when we remove our clothes to go to bed, we find our shirt fronts like a dissipated concertina and our "$3\frac{3}{4}$" collars ditto.

There are very few women in the city crowd. They are so rare that they walk about apologetically and attempt to efface themselves. They try to be businesslike, poor dears, in their linen dresses and blouses, gathered in tightly at neck, waist, and wristbands; and their hats are inclined to be pinched and "perched." The males scowl at but tolerate them, for do they not know that "all this rot about women coming into the city is bound to stop. They can't hold their own with us, my boy."

However, the typewriter is still frightfully modern and the lordly male does not care too much about working it

It is too like a sewing machine—" and I'm not a bally nurse-maid-office boy," the comment of a time when women were inferior to men and the men knew it and the women knew it. No good these females giving themselves airs. No good half a dozen of them making tentative efforts at " bloomers," including an already bygone Lady Florence Dixie, and half a thousand sitting bolt upright upon bicycles, as though they had ramrods down their backs, with semi-bifurcated picquet skirts, pinched to the limit at the waist and with saucy sailor hats sitting on their nose ends, riding in circles at gymkhanas " and making themselves look unwomanly and ridiculous, Bill, old boy—and what would you think if your mother started doing that—that's what I ask—what ? ? ? "

The female knew her place. The male knew his. All the same, *she* was coming.

They carry small brown-paper packages tied with white string in a day when " a lady that is a lady " is not supposed to have a stomach, for in all this big city there is no place where a poor girl may eat and the teashop " ladies only " department is unknown. When these unfortunate females go into one of the cheap eating-places they are treated as pariahs, and lordly waiters with a wife and half a dozen children at £2 5s. a week, including tips, refuse to wait on them. They cannot find a room in which to " do themselves up " and city employers object tacitly to providing them with the elementary decencies of life in the offices where they hang their diminished heads.

But they are beginning to be used, all the same, because many of them regard their wages (15s. to 30s. a week) as ' pin-money " and usually live at home or as they can. But through it all, they are frightfully respectable and apologetic, especially as the night comes on and they have to go home to Finsbury Park or Clapham Junction or Balham or Woodford.

For it is now six o'clock, in a day that began for most of these under-nourished girls at 8.30 or 9 in the morning. And so you see them through an ill-considered window making tentative pats at the "roll" of the hair which is caught up and planked on top in a sort of bun, or in the older girls with a twist in the back. A bobbed maiden would almost certainly have been bitten in the neck by her outraged sisters.

As they steal out into the city streets to join the human tides that sweep resistlessly towards Broad Street and Liverpool Street and London Bridge, you will notice that however poorly they may be dressed, they are all decently gloved. For in those days the bare hand of a woman would have been as disgraceful as a rouged face, and of course powder and rouge are still the prerogatives of "a certain type" (we never referred to these things directly).

They walk along the streets with rather mincing steps, for they are corseted almost to extinction—not only their figures but their feet. In that day, not one girl in ten had a foot presentable in the nude, not indeed that any women of them all, even the most barefaced, would have shown her foot, any more than she would have shown her leg. The female foot was a mass of warts and bunions with an ominous "lift" over the joint of the big toe, for every woman crammed her No. 6 foot into a No. 4 shoe, in a day when the blessing of American "half-sizes" was not.

The women about us carry their umbrellas (parasols were not for the city) across their arms like the babies they all mean, secretly, to have the moment they can get out of the city; for human nature, especially feminine human nature, does not change. Their skirts are bell-bottomed and often "pinked"—for that same human nature *will* out. But their stockings, which were never seen in that day when

women were not supposed to have legs any more than stomachs, are, we suspect, of stout wool.

But youth is youth, and youth is fearless, and youth, once more feminine youth, will be served. For most of these pioneers of the Great Female Flux to the city are young, and where, this night of June, they come as single spies, to spy out the Land of male Promise, that is "the City," to-morrow they are to come in their battalions. And, after all, the male is still chivalrous, even the city male who, in his secret heart, where he keeps all his real thoughts, believes that all business girls "have forfeited the rights due to their sex," whatever that may mean, for the dear Lord knows they haven't any.

And so, as the girls in the *picquet* skirts and sailor hats slip through the barriers at Liverpool Street or London Bridge, the nineteenth century male steps back a little to allow them to pass. And when, in their perturbation they enter a "smoker" packed to the doors and with two sets of "solo" going in the corners over copies of the *Echo* and the *Standard*, each male there, whilst he curses under his breath, takes his favourite briar out from under his moustache and hides it in his pocket.

For woman is still "Queen of the Earth" and the hand that rocks, or hopes to rock the cradle, still rules the world —even the City world, which is a world unto itself.

VI

HIGH FINANCE

" Know this, my brethren, Heaven is clear
And all the clouds are gone—
The Proper Sort shall flourish now,
Good times are coming on " . . .
For though no fluttering fan be heard
Nor chaff be seen to flee—
The Lord shall winnow the Lord's Preferred—
And, *Hey then up go we!*

Our altars which the heathen brake
Shall rankly smoke anew,
And anise, mint, and cummin take
Their dread and sovereign due,
Whereby the buttons of our trade
Shall all restorèd be
With curious work in gilt and braid,
And, *Hey then up go we!*

Kipling's *Song of the Old Guard.*

In the 'nineties, in "the City" God was in his heaven and all was right with the world—that was, with England. For no financier of them all, from little clerk to company magnate, in that day of limited liability and unlimited losses, with the South African Rand spouting gold and diamonds and the British Public " taking freely," doubted that England *was* the world.

Germany, of course, existed, and even America, still a slightly fabulous land with Red Indians, cowboys and millionaires as the staple commodities, was on the map. But no city man in striped unmentionables and stainless

hat, in his wildest moments, if in a still sober and God-fearing city he could be said to have any "moments" at all, could have dreamed of a Germany holding up England, plus Europe, for four years and maiming or massacring a trifle of millions. "The British Navy would soon see to the Sauerkrauter, my boy—sausage and mashed—and don't you forget it!"

The world rested upon the British Empire, the British Empire upon England, and England upon the Navy. One school only there was in the island inviolate—the blue-water school. Tommy Atkins, a few hundred thousand of him, was pretty to look at in his scarlet tunic and little round cap on the side of his head, for the German pancake cap had not come yet, but Jack was the boy for work and Jack was the boy for play.

The Almighty, in whom every city man of that day discreetly believed, was of course an English God. His method, the British Empire. His weapon, the British Navy. A whiff of grape from the "Woolwich Infant" settled everything. The British phlegm had not then secretly been invaded. Queen Victoria was on the British throne as she was on the British pound—a solid golden pound and none of your flipperty-gibbets of foreign paper money. The Prince Consort was still a plaster saint shrined in the homes of millions. The British matron, still undivorceable, intact, ruled her home and the world with her august nose. And British virtue, that is, British finance, had a cinch on that same world, not to say a half-Nelson.

Can you realize the comfort and assurance contained in the city man's exterior of that day? For the city man *was* England.

On his round self-assured head was a large silk hat, set a trifle over his nose if he were a company promoter, and a trifle over the back of his head if he were not. His side

A Right-Royal Bride

Princess Marie of Edinburgh (Now Queen Dowager of Roumania)

whiskers alone were worth kings' ransoms, for their very security inhibited swindle. His eyes, like his whiskers, were usually set well apart, and he often shaved his upper lip as his chin.

On his back was a frock coat, generous as to size and as good as a credit note. On his feet, he wore spats over rather square-toed substantial boots, highly polished, and in his right hand he grasped the Imperial umbrella, sometimes unrolled, sometimes not.

In his left, he occasionally carried a black leather bag with papers in it, if he were a man of substance, and his lunch if he were not. As a rule, however, he carried nothing but his " gamp " or a walking stick, for the city man of that day hated impedimenta, and I have known the head of a firm of mining engineers send a small boy all the way home to Edwardes Square, Kensington, with half a pound of tobacco, rather than be seen carrying it in the streets.

When this prop of empire entered his second or first-class carriage at Snaresbrook or Putney, he frummaged in his coat tails and produced a case, out of which he would proceed to extract a bulldog briar shining with age, which he would be about to fill up with dark " Old Judge " or his own special blend if he were rich and a connoisseur, or with one of the many cheaper " mixtures " if he were not. In those days, when there were neither stores nor standardization, the city man had special places for everything. Even his pipe mixture was prepared for him by his private tobacconist. (There was one famous tobacconist in St. Swithin's Lane, not far from that delectable shop where you could buy custard-apples, mangoes, and guava jelly, who had a black and yellow mixture, secret, sweet and mellow, that scented of all the tea gardens of all the Emperors of China. For there was still an Emperor of China. I think it cost eightpence the ounce, but it was beyond price.)

Out from those capacious pockets would then come the big semicircle of rubber, in which a half-pound could comfortably be stored away.

This mixture he would proceed with a deliberation that was awesome to cram into the bowl of the briar, gently trapped between first finger and thumb, for a cigarette he did abhor as poisonous and only fit for office boys. Sometimes the pipe would be a seasoned meerschaum, lovingly coloured to its rich dark brown and gold in an age of leisure, and consisting often of a nigger head drooping from a beautiful piece of clear or clouded block amber—and of course unmounted. For the city man of that day, " neat but not gaudy " was the guiding star of his mundane existence.

How tenderly would he press down the sweet juicy tobacco, smelling like all really good tobacco of rum and tea, as it fell from the pouch, allowing a little artistic frill to hang around the edge of the bowl. Then back into the pockets again for the long box of wax vestas or the sweet scented fusee, which he would apply carefully to the fringe of yellow hair over the nigger's head. Then the steady, slow inhalation ; exhalation ; exaltation.

If I have exercised myself at length in the lighting of the incense of morning as of evening by the British Business Man, it is because this rite and this man did represent an age that is passed, as it did represent the British Empire itself. Unshaken as the Matterhorn. Sound as the Bank of England. Sure as death or quarter day. Imagination he may have lacked, but not that " character " with which the Victorian Englishman at least made excellent substitute. And when all comes to all, it is probable that for sheer probity, inside his limits, we shall never look upon his like again. The American, like the Latin business man of that day, might sometimes not be so good as his word—the

Englishman was usually a trifle better. But then he promised so little!

I think the real difference between "the city" of that day and this—perhaps much more than the city—was that then men had no doubts. Even youth had not begun to doubt age, for age still sat entrenched.

The vision of a Germany in arms disabling three for every German disabled and holding a pistol at the head of Empire, as has been said, had not come to discomfit. Nor had the sun of These United States, still in those days of fliers like the "Umbria" and "Etruria" and "The City of Paris," eight days away, showed itself in the financial heavens, bold and brassy, to threaten. Pugilists and pork-packers, comic niggers and cowboys, it might produce. Financiers—never!

History in that day meant nothing. Other empires might or might not have gone the way of all that flesh which is grass, for did not the Bible say so? Not so the British Empire, founded upon that same Bible, the peculiar prerogative of the British People, with its own Jehovah-Jah. The British Empire—that would last for ever!

Who was it that had been set over half of the world? England. Who was it that knew how to manage the nigger—that was, the Indian and the African or anything with a meerschaum skin? England. Who had produced General Gordon, with a cane and a prayer instead of a gun and a curse? England. To whom did the Foreigner pay the secret adulation that Vice pays to Virtue? Victoria—that is, England.

Who had got her foot well into the China-shop? England. And if there were those Little Englanders who whispered Opium War—why who could settle them with a prayer? England. And if These United States had had the madness, that is the bad taste, to cut themselves adrift from the dear

Homeland—that was their look out, and anyhow they were a vulgar pack.

And about all this there was a magnificent assurance which precluded hypocrisy. The British Business Man of that day may have been many things—he was never a hypocrite, and though an envious world called him that, it respected him and it especially respected his navy.

I imagine that religion tangled itself into High Finance as into everything else in those dear dead days.

There was a strange genus called the Christian Business Man whose mental pabulum was " In His Steps " by Charles Sheldon, coupled with a certain prophetic weekly, his spiritual home the Exeter Hall. Jabez Spencer Balfour of the Liberator disaster was of that ilk, as indeed were dozens of other prosperous city men, by political profession mostly Liberal, for our parties were very definitely theologically segregated. Like their counterpart, the British statesman, they were always surprising the hyper-intelligent foreigner, who, to his malign astonishment, would discover that piety did not always preclude penetration, or the odour of sanctity business acumen.

I myself was for a time private secretary to one of these typical old-timers, who now seem to have vanished from the scenes of their earthly activities for those of a supposedly better world, where finance and the financiers are not. Though how they will occupy themselves in that new world without the " market quotations " which in this world were the breath of their nostrils, in the New World English which is so rapidly displacing that of the Old, " gets me."

This gentleman was a millionaire, a member of the New Reform Club, a patron of the Salvation Army (a very usual patronage for the successful city man of those days, when Hooleys offered their gifts, if not of franckincense and

myrrh, at least of gold communion services to cathedrals), and, I believe, a tower of strength in his local Bethel.

Some of these gentlemen were apt at any moment to break out into pious exhortations to their clerks, especially when about to make out impeccable reasons for refusing " a rise " or for cutting down their salaries, although I am bound to say that this latter was not occluded from the other camps, political and theological. Only that those others were, so to speak, not so confidentially hand in glove with the Almighty when they made their refusals.

For in one section of the City in those days, we were apt to do everything to prayer, and if it be alleged, as it sometimes was alleged, that we were whited sepulchres, I can only say that the victim, as the victimizer, was completely unconscious of it. Personally, I think the allegation was envy—the envy of success.

Success justified everything. Though the pillar of Nonconformity and Free Trade, which then was a religion in itself, would not put his money in a brewery or " speculate " by " covers " and " margins," he had no more feeling than a Laplander about taking shares in a sweated cotton mill or in a bogus gold mine, so long as he *held* them as an " investment."

What a ticklish conscience some of us had in those days !

I myself as a youth entering the city was considerably exercised in my conscience, nervous throbbing ganglion that it was, as to telling a caller that my employer was " out " when he was " in." And even now my blood runs a trifle chilly as I postulate the possible consequences of my half-hearted attempt to prevent influential visitors from using the office telephone because of the clause in the telephone company's " Conditions," which I had faithfully read, that the instrument was only for the use of the subscriber. Nothing that I can write can more clearly mark

the moral delineation and declension between that time and the present.

In the City Temple, with Dr. Joseph Parker going strong, there were meetings for business men, if I rightly recollect, with the Reverend Joe, those small eyes shrewdly set upon his congregation, letting himself go before the Lord.

What an extraordinarily good actor-talker he was! With what pungency and sly humour did he get home on the Devil, who then was as personal and imminent as the Income Tax or Abdul the Damned, the last-named specially delivered by the Lord as a butt for Joseph.

One London night, or rather afternoon, two lights descended upon the City out of the American firmament. One, Mr. Torrey. The other, Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Torrey was a plump, middle-sized, frock-coated, rather venemous-looking gentleman with a cropped white beard. Mr. Alexander, a cheerfully cadaverous youngish man with a piercing if passable tenor, and clean-shaven. Mr. Torrey did the exhortation and devil-hunting, Mr. Alexander did the singing. Much as the Moody and Sankey of an earlier generation who had preceded them.

Perhaps one of the queerest things in that day of queer things in Big Business, was to see ranged upon the platform of the great hall of the Cannon Street Hotel, well-known bankers, financiers, company promoters, stockbrokers, heads of dry-goods establishments in St. Paul's Churchyard —that silent protest of Nonconformity in the face of the Cathedral of the Established—all ranged upon the platform of the great hall of the Cannon Street Hotel, where I myself as secretary of public companies used to hold some of my own company meetings.

There was Mr. Torrey, quite uncompromising about hell and the devil, literally giving his audience the former, and they staggering under the ministrations and enjoying them.

(There was no damned nonsense about His Satanic Majesty in those days. Now, we have abolished him, and, as some think, for the worse.)

There was Mr. Alexander holding himself modestly in the background, ready at any moment to burst forth into song, whilst tears stood in the eyes of the bankers, former tough guys of Westralia and the Rand, stock exchange Johnnies, and masses of little city clerks on twenty-five to thirty bob a week.

First, exhortation by Mr. Torrey. Then, prayer by Mr. Torrey. Then prayer or "testimony" by one of the city men, proud to humble himself with a spiritual pride that was fearful to behold. Then the GLORY SONG, the chorus of which, as I remember, went something like this:

Oh! that will be-e-e,
Glory for me.
Oh! that will be-e-e,
Glory for me.
When from my place,
I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.

This was the only concession ever made by the City to the Land of Hope and Glory so far as I know. From that land we would take our pork and our evangelists and even sometimes our husbands (when we belonged to the New Poor, consequent upon Sir William Harcourt's Death Duties, just making its appearance); but we would take nothing else.

Yet it was not all milk and water in the city, which was then a sporting city. Muscular Christianity was popular, and a fighting parson in the world of melodrama was then attracting large crowds to see the difference between precept and practice. "The Boys' Brigade" was also a concession to muscular Christianity, with the object of

" promoting in boys the habits of discipline and reverence, so making them manly Christians."

All the really big city toffs were patrons of " the sport of kings " or of the ring. One of these gentlemen, indeed, in those days of bruising, financial and other, once fought another gentleman in Jo'burg for twenty stiff rounds over a trifle of a lady. And this gentleman was a Fellow of at least one scientific society and an astronomer of no mean merit. What a sensation there would be to-day if Sir Oliver Lodge challenged another gent to a ten-round contest with 4-oz. gloves under the Marquis of Queensberry rules !

At the City Carlton, Gog and Magog thrashed out the merits of the Derby runners or " made a little book " on the Oaks or the St. Leger. Every office had its " sweep," and there was an appalling mortality in grandmothers and aunts on every Derby and Oaks day. New systems were being tried out at Monte Carlo by adventurous city men, following the everlasting example of " The Man that Broke the Bank," Monte Carlo Wells himself, and I am persuaded that the principal claim of one of these gentlemen to a seat on the board of one of the richest gold mines in the world with which I had connection, was that he had twice broken that bank.

In a word, we paid lip service to religion—but, secretly, our hearts and inclinations would be at the Devil.

For it was a human " City," and thank God for it !

The big nights at the National Sporting, when, camelia in evening coat, men dressed like dukes to see two East End boys fight their twenty rounders, were as much part of the life of the city as the Stock Exchange itself. The sporty Johnny was found everywhere.

The Stock Exchange was the very cockpit of sport, and many a broker prided himself more upon his skill with the gloves than his skill with stocks and shares, and the power

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The Coming of "Wireless"

Electricity (to Submarine Cable and Land Telegraph). "I don't like to get rid of old and valuable servants, but I'm afraid I shall not be able to keep either of you much longer."

to dab a brother broker on the nose in a time when "first home on the conk for a drink" was a popular pastime, than upon his knowledge of "Johnnies" or "Kaffirs." Noble sportsmen like Lord Harris and "demon bowlers" like F. R. Spofforth were often as expert exponents of Big Business as they were of bat and ball.

But this sporting instinct sometimes broke out in unseemly places.

There was one gentleman, the pastor of a certain chapel in North London, I believe, who would come to the office where I acted as secretary of public companies to consult me about joining another reconstruction of the Hansard Union, one of the Bottomley companies. He wore the regulation choker and black coat and the hairy appendages of the "bugwhisker Joe" of that day, but I can swear it was the same man who stood one day at London Bridge Station, off to a race-meeting, attired in loud mustard checks and brown boots with the tags standing out at the back and fancy stockings. I believe every city man, parson or other, at heart in those days wanted to be thought a sportsman when sport was no less vicarious than it is to-day.

But the great sport, "the Great Game," of that day was speculation. Gargantuan wild-cat schemes, fabulous as Golconda, would be loosed upon a greedy and expectant world overnight by clever gents with a passion for figures and other people's money, who with their driven clerks, worked late into the London nights and through into the pale London dawns.

Silver mines in South America. Gold mines in West Australia and South Africa. Placer workings in the United States. Copper mines in Canada. Diamond mines on the Rand and emerald mines in India. The whole British Empire was laid under embargo by the facile promoter of

that day, when dividends paid out of capital seemed to fall like manna from the skies and "sacred lakes" in South America and the sources of the mystic Amazon were being tapped for gold, gold, gold—gold that was too often copper pyrites, or merely cock-a-doodle and poppycock. Grocers, clergymen, and army majors, in themselves three fruitful veins that never failed to yield, roamed about the city streets murmuring: "deep level"; "open cast workings"; "one thousand and fifty pound stamps"; "picking 'em out of the blue"; and "5-oz. propositions."

How far such companies proved successful may be evidenced by the fact that not one in ten ever paid a dividend. But the ingenuous patience of the British Public was as inexhaustible as the ingenious patience of the promoter.

Shares of companies even before going to allotment were changing hands above par. Any old hole in the ground, provided it was on one of the Tom Tiddler's grounds of the man-in-the-street, was good enough to call a mine, for as an eminent mining engineer of that day remarked: "No miner can see further than his pick." A definition of one financial daily in those "Answers to Correspondents": then beloved of the genus mug, ran: "The answer to your question is that a mine is a hole in the ground with nothing at the bottom of it but a lie," and the City's nicely graded shades of prevarication of that period was: "Liars, damned liars, and mining engineers."

The city was alive with "wild cats," that is with companies of the type mentioned, as of financial Tom o' Bedlams and Pied Pipers. Of those burning days as of some of these Toms, it might be written:

> With a heart of furious fancies,
> Whereof I am commander,
> With a burning spear and *a horse of air*,
> To the wilderness I wander.

These pipers piped dulcetly the oldest song in the world, save one—the song of the golden fleece, whilst behind them, out into the wilderness of high finance, streamed the British Public, butcher, baker and candlestick maker; Jew, Turk and Infidel; Christian and Pagan.

There were of course great financial combines of the highest respectability such as the Wernher Beit, the Consolidated Goldfields of South Africa, and the Barney Barnato group, but in that Age of Suckers, the public, asking to be bled, preferred the "wild cat."

"The City" had its Gogs and Magogs to whom it bowed down with unction and hope, some of them, in that dramatic period, with an Hebraic sense of millions and melodrama. Mr. Whitaker Wright had built his submarine billiard room in one of the Home Counties, had moved a hill or two because they interfered with his view, and when found guilty of fraud, had taken the short way out by poison in the law courts. The excessive Barney Barnato was lying somewhere at the bottom of the ocean. Cecil Rhodes had passed from the scene and was lying peacefully on the Motopo Hills looking upon the African Empire which he had imagined but which he would never see.

Where is such drama of life and death to-day?

But *the* wizard of finance was Mr. Horatio Bottomley, who with his John Bull smile and snub, honest John Bull face, had only to hold up his plump hand to get thousands poured into his lap. His reconstructions always went through and nobody thought of doubting him and his ability to call down gold from the skies.

Ernest Terah Hooley, the man whose secret, self-confessed, was "thinking in millions where others thought in thousands," I would meet in St. Helen's Place, Bishopsgate, gaitered like a farmer and with plain, bearded face, a cross between a bowler and topper for a hat that would have created

confidence in a boa constrictor, and, as I think, cross-pockets. His stick he carried like an honest agriculturist out for a walk to survey the ground before sowing.

He was popularly supposed to have made two millions on the Bovril and three millions on the Dunlop deal and at the magic of his name and nod peers were paralysed, statesmen envied, and churchmen tumbled.

Albert Chevalier each night might be " knocking 'em in the Old Kent Road " on the halls, but the city josses were knocking 'em in Throgmorton and Lombard Streets. The Aunt Sallies went up and the Aunt Sallies went down, and the coco-nuts in the prospectuses were all milky, milky-o !

The Witwatersrand was the Tom Tiddler's ground of the world and " The Miner's Dream of Home " the ballad of the halls. British Guiana, like the other Guianas, had its corps and corpses of prospectors, and Sierra Leone, " The White Man's Grave," as it was called in a day when the mosquito was, like the common fly, regarded as rather a pet, was riddled with mine-shafts and graves. Men were mouthing Klondyke and Canada, Rhodesia and Rand, without very much knowing what they were talking about, and the money merry-go-round in that time of cheap money *did* go round in full blast, with its steam orchestra, its streamers flying, and its glittering " horses of air."

But the hansom and the four-wheeler were still in the streets. Queen Victoria was on her throne, safe as houses. God was in his heaven. All was right with England

God save the Queen !

VII

FEEDING THE BRUTE IN THE 'NINETIES

FEEDING the brute, and especially the business brute, was a problem in the 'nineties of infinite complication, often solved by the simple expedient of not feeding him, and especially her—not feeding him at all! God knows how the people with slender purses existed before the advent of the Aerated Bread Company, known as the "A.B.C.," which had just made its appearance. I think they must have resorted to the public house and drowned their hunger-pangs in Scotch and "four-ale."

You could get a bit to eat in the "pub" of that day, but, as the Scotsman joked, "wee' deeficulty," and the early morning coffee and sandwich were not. The public house was a place in which to drink, not to eat, and you always drank standing if you were a real man.

And of course you drank in the morning. ("Come out and have a drink, old man!") And you had a "tiddley" going home at night. You could do no business without lubrication, when it was "glasses round"—and glasses round from every man there, in a day in which the national anthems were soon to be: "Come and have a tiddley round the corner" and "Beer, glorious Beer," the latter of which ran:

Beer, beer, glorious beer!
Fill yerself right up to 'ere—'ere— ere
Up with the sale of it;
Down with a pail of it;
Glorious, glor-r-r-ious beer!

In the bars, as a weak concession to comfort, there was sometimes a brass footrail on which to rest one foot. It gave you a gentlemanly touch in an age when the very art of living was "genteel"; and for that matter, it had only been the day before yesterday, so to speak, that a gent in Dundreary whiskers and with a glass of champagne in his hand, had sung to packed and admiring houses:

For Champagne Charlie is me name
For Champagne Charlie is me name
I laugh, ha-ha!
I sing, ha-ha!
—Etc., etc., etc.

or sentiments to that effect.

The A.B.C. was a godsend for the impecunious, and it was, I imagine, aimed at the *clientèle* of the Alamode houses and for people who wanted light refreshment without alcohol.

How crisp and fresh were the plates of tongue, when the incandescents went up in the winter evenings with the yellow fog clammy on the panes! Outside, a foggy hell. Inside, paradise regained. How golden were the scones! How exquisite the cleanliness! How satisfying the "Lunch cake" at 1d. the chunk and the more delicate Madeira at 2d.! How satisfying was the "staminal" cocoa at 3d. and how filling at the price! Eggs . . . but here a diversion.

It was Dan Leno who would say with that hollow piquancy: "Eggs! There are three kinds of egg. There is the rotten egg—very useful at political meetings—very common. There is the new-laid egg—almost extinct. And there is 'THE EGG.'"

Until the coming of the A.B.C., it was this last indeterminate oval, of uncertain age, that was the staple food of London's breakfasts. In the A.B.C., to the astonished wonder of London, you could actually get a fresh egg. It cost tup-

Virtue Threatened by a Victorian Casanova

"If you are the cleverest man in London, you are also the most heartless."
(*Drawn by Fred. Barnard*)

pence, and poached eggs on toast, that famous *tour de force* of the Aerated, cost sixpence.

And for the love of all that is dead and gone, how could anyone beat the most refreshing tea on earth with the boiling water striking downwards from a pipe into the heart of the leaves to wrench out their secret aroma? Also, apart from the expensive restaurants Up West, the first place in London where you could get a decent cup of coffee was the A.B.C.

I know that some of us younger buckos blushed furiously when with stifled voices we asked for " a glass of milk, scone and butter " ; for young manhood was very modest in the nineties and the early widowed look of the A.B.C. waitress rather daunted us.

Slaters came many years later, but, excepting the short-lived experiment of the Duval restaurants on the Parisian system, Slaters were the first to supply a plain, well-cooked meal at a reasonable cost, if you wanted something more than light refreshment. We were very clannish in those days and the Slaterites rather looked down on the A.B.C.-ites. Some of the restaurants even held dances to keep their customers together, and I have lively recollections of a dance of Slaters' customers at the old Empress Rooms, in which nobody spoke to anybody else.

At these rather funereal feasts, we did our best to keep the thing going by a sort of fictitious *bonhomie*, presumably based upon the fact that we were Gastronomes or Caterites or whatever the particular restaurant that we affected might be. Sometimes, I fancy that at such feasts, we entertained angels unawares. Sometimes good angels—sometimes, not so good.

At one of these dances, given in a West End hall with a famous floor, I remember, so to speak, prowling round a gorgeous female for whose charms I had conceived sudden

admiration, although I am assured she never shared the thoroughly respectable fare of the eating-place which had given the dance.

She stared at me I thought with rather a glassy eye, but scrambling an introduction upon the strength of our supposedly communal board, I took her out into the middle of a floor glassy as the eye aforesaid. But when I had got her there, I found it impossible for her to revolve, despite the dulcet "Blue Danube," played at that time like a dirge. (The double-quick waltz came in much later.)

So finding that she either could not or would not revolve, I brought her back again to a partner, also with a glassy eye and, indeed, happily "on," the delicate expression of the period to connote inebriation. Who, lifting his dancing pump coyly to show me a "sprig" sticking out in the middle of the heel, said: "That's the tip, my boy, for a place like this, with a floor like ice. When you feel yourself going, jam down your heel and you're safe as houses."

There were some amazing situations.

It was Mr. Lyons, however, who first solved the London food problem. Manna out of a clear sky, he fell upon our dazzled senses like a deity (someone called him a "diety") come to earth, trailing behind him a chain of tea-shops in white and gold like clouds of glory. He was the pioneer of the "no tips," of the dainty snack, and of the standardized price, so that whether you let him feed you in Whitechapel or Kensington you paid the same 2d. for a cup of tea or coffee and the same 7d. for steak and kidney pie, or pudding (I never *could* find the kidneys in this most succulent comestible), or for the score of dainties, ticklish to the palate, hitherto undreamed.

Thank God for Mr. Lyons!

The "Popular," in Piccadilly, however, will be the enduring monument to his greatness. Never was there and

never will there be again the value given by the old Popular.

With what awe did our Victorian eyes view the gorgeous, gilt-edged, gorgonzola halls; the quadruple electric-light lustres, with the pale-pink gas shades in the background in case anything went wrong with the fickle electricity. How we revelled in the Turkey carpets and marble staircases!

What of the "Popular" lunches! What of the "Popular" teas! But, above all, what of its suppers—those luscious Lucullean feasts where the menu actually forced you, already gorged, to ask for a second helping! Did it not stand on the menu? "Second portions will be willingly served free of charge."

The "Popular" closed at that time about 12.30 in the morning. What glory to go and hear real music with your food, and, dreamy after a rum omelette, to loll there, listening to a Waldteufel waltz, to Beethoven, or to "Two Eyes of Blue," for we were catholic in our tastes, but thanks be! there was no jazz. Oh! to scrunch once more the cool crisp French salads; to eat the wild duck stewing in its delicious dark juices, colourful with red currant jelly; to taste the then unbelievable luxury of ice-cream properly frozen. How often have I sat there from 9 p.m. to midnight and after, absorbing and being absorbed! What a *table d'hôte* for 2s. 6d. and what pretty, decent girls in black and white to wait upon you and to tell you confidentially about their mothers and their lovers! Thank you, Mr. Lyons. "Christians to the Lyons" was then solemn, delightful fact.

Many rival tea-shops sprang up like mushrooms, mostly to disappear like the early cloud and morning dew. There was "The British Teatable" where you could get a cup of tea for 1½d. served in a little brown pot on a tray, that I sometimes patronized, just over the road from the Pavilion

in Shaftesbury Avenue. They served there an excellent tea-cake toasted and buttered for an extra 2d., but they lacked the infinite variety of Mr. Lyons, that variety which age has not withered nor custom staled.

Of course if you were absolutely on your uppers, there was always Pearce and Plenty or Harris's, which displayed their savoury, glistening enticements under the white incandescents. In the daytime, they looked nothing.

Standing outside Mr. Harris's far-famed establishments of " sausage and mashed," with the sausages and the brown onions frizzling and sizzling in the windows and with the exquisite odours wafting through the open door at the side, and the white-robed cooks—what would I not have given to have been a 'orny 'anded son of toil instead of a gent? For it was then *infra dig.* to visit Harris's—not to-day, when, as I was astounded to observe a little time ago, a " steak and onions " costs 1s. 2d., the price then of three Harris meals. How, indeed, in the world of food, the mighty have fallen from their seats, and the humble and meek have been exalted!

Lockhart's was a step still lower in the social scale—that Lockhart's where you could get a mug of steaming cocoa for ½d. " Doorsteps " of bread and butter and chunks of a pale yellow cake like bricks with measles, at a halfpenny and a penny or " wing " a time, staunched the most unstaunchable voracity.

Pearce and Plenty was, however, several cuts above some of these places. I remember seeing Pearce, a tall thin man of a grey-eyed kindliness, superintend his caterings with love. He would stand there, seeing everything, making sure that everybody had enough with a " cut and come again " air that was always good-tempered and always courteous. His places were " all over the shop " and when he appeared the " Good Pull-ups for Carmen " became but meaty memories.

But even Mr. Pearce was forbidden me by the taboos of the great city. I simply dared not. Mr. Isaacs of fried fish fame—yes. Mr. Pearce—no. Why, is still beyond me, but there it was. For we lived in a world of taboos.

How fine drawn were the lines!

The man who had his midday repast at " The Ship and Turtle " was compelled to smoke a Havana cigar afterwards rather than a briar. But the city clerk who went into that pleasant little hell, the tea-shop basement on the edge of the two Bishopsgates, where we all stewed comfortably in our own tobacco juices, could suck at his black cutty till he himself was black in the face and nobody to think the worse of him, as he fumbled with his drink and his dominoes.

The man who hied to one of the " Meccas " was, again, a cut above the Lyons crowd, just as the Bodega gent was a cut above him—but all these grades of eating and drinking houses had also their grades of dress and smokes—and of course no gent that was a gent would smoke a pipe in the streets with a top hat. He would at once have been set down as a " bounder."

We, poor prisoners of the 'nineties and early nineteen hundreds, prisoners of our own imaginings, had in our eatings and drinkings invented a system of taboos as intricate and inescapable as those of any South Sea Island you like to name. A man might have all the virtues of the Twelve Apostles, but if he cut instead of broke his bread at dinner, or if he put his cheese into his mouth on the end of his knife (unless he were a Stock Exchange devil-may-care gent or a duke) you classed him with the outcast and the criminal.

What a queer lot we all were in that prehistoric period—pachydermatous and " precious." But the Lord knows, we meant well . . . that was our curse!

It was into the middle of this mummification that

the pioneer of the American Invasion shoved his enterprising head. And, by gosh! he was going to twist the British lion's tail and teach the animile how to feed. He was going to make the British lion sit up—and above all, he was going to make him eat out of his hand *and make him eat quickly.*

The giddy pioneer of the American Quick Lunch which flung open its gorgeous doors one fine morning in the Strand to knock spots out of leisurely Lyons and anarchic A.B.C.'s and to serve red-hot grilled lobster within twenty-five seconds and buckwheat cakes within ten, lasted, exactly, I think, three months. "He was so quick going," one of his contemporaries said, "that he didn't even know he had come."

London, the prehistoric London of the turn of the century, was too much for him. London, like all the greater pachyderms, wanted to take its time over its meals and, afterwards, to chew its cud in peace.

A Coffee Stall in the 'Nineties

VIII

ALAMODE IN THE CITY—OR "AS YOU LIKE IT"

Whack 'em up! whack 'em up! whack 'em up, Sal,
Whack 'em up! whack 'em up! there's a sweet gal.
Please don't forget we're folks,
Please do not mind our jokes,
After you with the artichokes—
Do be a pal!

Boiled beef and carrots all *à la mode*,
Put your hand in the hole and pull out the toad,
Spuds, turnips, and beans,
Marrows, gravies, tureens,
After you with the greens—
Oh! what a load.

FEEDING in "the City" was one thing. Feeding in the West End, something quite other. It was not only Temple Bar that separated the City of London from the City of Westminster. Yet there were restaurants that smacked both of "the City" and the West End, belonging to neither. Of such were Simpson's and "The Cheshire Cheese." Here at least, East and West did meet.

The City, with the West End restaurant, however, had one thing in common—it was almost prohibitive if you had not plenty of the "rhino" or "splosh." Otherwise, Gatti's, for example, had little in common with Pim's or with that fabulous eating-place, without name, in Throgmorton Street, where Stocks and Shares got its cut from the joint at fabulous prices.

I was once taken to Gatti's by an aldermanic uncle. Only once. It was a gourmet's dream.

There were bearded gentlemen in the glacial shirt fronts and chokers of the evening dress of the period and beautiful ladies in the flouncy foam-like creations with plethora before and behind. Mashers in drooping moustaches, ladling out for their partners in sin (at least that was how *I* felt about it) an exquisite amber liquid from bowls in which lumps of ice bobbed tantalizingly up and down.

About the masher of the 'nineties, especially when he wore a beard, there was something vaguely polygamous. Hence my confusion. And alcohol for me, as for millions, spelled sin.

My uncle and I stood before a great grill that might have been the red hearth-stone of hell under the high white lights of heaven; chose carnivorously our own chops as hunters before the Lord; gave a tanner to the grill cook; and had them served magnificently. But that was luxury.

Of luxury also was the famous "Cheshire Cheese." I knew a man who once starved himself for three days in order to do the right thing by the—was it—"steak, kidney, lark, mushroom, and oyster pie"? Ravening, he even played a game of football on the afternoon of the fateful day to put the final edge on appetite. He was, he says, carried out of the "Cheese" some hours afterwards, drunk with happiness and food.

Of similar consistency was Simpson's—the old Simpson's. Of the original Simpson meal I refuse to speak, because it is indescribable. You trained for it, however, by stages, and when appetite flagged, you watched the obese white-capped *chefs* as with knife and carver hanging under the curve of the belly, they pushed before them upon their smoking chariots the sirloins and barons, and so wooed appetite once more. And when the knife went in—oh! the gravy.

Lord Mayor's Day—London on Parade When Hats Were Hats

But for all these you needed a long purse. If you wanted cheaper fare, there were the old Alamode beef houses of course, where, between high-backed iron-hard seats, you could get the invariable silverside and carrots, with cheese and bread to follow.

These places were like little hells (there was one of them in Walbrook that I would patronize when in funds, which steamed like a Turkish bath). In the window, presumably to excite the appetite, there would be gargantuan cauliflowers, white as snow; great red and green cabbages; and marrows of bellies yellow and hypertrophied, that lay back like repleted aldermen.

You paid a shilling for "a cut from the joint and two veg's," and you gave a penny to the waiter, who thanked you instead of damning you as he would to-day.

Of course, in the City proper, if you were one of the toffs, you dropped into Short's in the little passage off Lombard Street for a glass of port and a biscuit or into the old Chop House for a chop and a cup of coffee. The Palmerston in Old Broad Street, like the old "Ship and Turtle" of Leadenhall Street, was only for the super-toffs. Then there was Birch's.

But that we must approach religiously. Birch's, the high narrow house with the old-fashioned panes deep set in the green-framed windows, on them the worn gilt lettering of wines and soups—rare wines and THE soup. The real turtle soup which used to be sent out in hermetically sealed covers escorted by sober men in aprons of green baize to the Mansion House banquets. There was also in that place a sort of divine cake.

The wines were perfumed and perfect and the prices terrifying. I speak from hearsay, for my money never ran to Birch's, and I, like hundreds of other clerks, usually made my meal out of a brown paper packet in the Royal

Exchange, over the road, where the beadles, in cocked hats, staffs, and bag-cloaks, viewed me superciliously. When I had finished at the Exchange, I would cross over to Birch's and regale myself in fancy.

At Pim's, you could get the famous smoked Aberdeen salmon at 5s. the lb., or if you were one of those flash stockbrokers who kept their four-in-hands and other things, high-steppers who lost heavily on the Derby, but who affected to be leading the simple life, you said: "Damn it all! I can't afford Pim's—but I go there for my humble bit of gorgonzola and my humble glass of beer." So did you sit upon your high stool before the counters, virtuously eschewing the crabs and crimson lobsters, and munched the best cheese and drank the best beer in England.

How often has my poor mouth salivated as I looked at the boar's head in the window with the lemon in the snout and the coloured icing on the cheeks!

And when the summer afternoon drew down into the shadows of the city streets, you dropped into the Sweeting's near Liverpool Street station to buy a snack. There was a basket of giant prawns, pink and fresh and as unlike the modern prawn as a week-old lobster is like one drawn up blue from the sea depths, into which you passed a splendidly careless hand as you went in or out—if you were an *habitué*. I never was, but through the window I often saw others doing it, and saw them with envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness gnawing at my vitals.

Every city man in those days who pretended—and they all pretended—to be a good father would, upon his return on a summer's evening to the bosom of his expectant family, feel in the tails of his frock coat to produce a packet of pink prawns or a succulent red lobster from Pim's or Sweeting's.

The office where I worked was cheek by jowl with the

Mansion House at a time when Lord Mayor's banqueting nights seemed to come twice a week and the sky, the sea, and the earth were scoured for tit-bits for the aldermanic stomach. Do we not remember the cartoon in *Punch* of a Lord Mayor's banquet in which one obese alderman, horror on his countenance, stops a fellow obesity as he is about to raise a spoonful of scalding hot turtle soup to his lips: "Stop, stop for heaven's sake, my dear Sir! I know of a terrible tragedy. Bloggs last week scalded his mouth with the very first mouthful of soup and couldn't taste a mouthful of anything afterwards!" ?

The tantalizing scents of the Lord Mayor's kitchen on one of the big nights would come wafting up to me where I sat in my room overlooking the little churchyard behind George Street. I have smelled every individual scent of food on this earth at that window. And sometimes I would peer through the iron grill into the cavernous gloom of the kitchen, to see nothing except white-robed figures moving dimly through space like ghosts, what time my poor empty stomach quivered and my tongue watered. "To-night was the night," but not for me.

Apart from the restaurants I have named, there was literally almost no other eating-house at that time in the City where you could get something substantial. That is, if you except an occasional little Italian restaurant, where they would cook the joints execrably and where they fed you on sticky pastries made of sliced apples and rice, covered with a glucose mess—only that in that day I fancy glucose had not yet drawn its shining stickiness through beer and jam. We still used the brown Demerara sugar.

It is also literally true that in the whole of London "city" so far as I know, there was but one place where you could get first-class food at a second-class price. That place was in Bishopsgate Street Without, and it will be

recognized by thousands of grateful customers. It was of course kept by a Frenchman—and a mighty man he was of girth and gastronomics—the very picture of *gourmandise.*

In this oasis, where you sat without an inch of space and where you queued the length of the shop waiting your turn, you were ministered to by ladies of the Jewish persuasion and of most delightful and affectionate dispositions. Which city man reading these words will not remember Maudie as she came steering her way in great white apron under full sail down the shop with two plates of steaming soup, three dishes of vegetables and two plates of beef as she shouted to clear the way: "All down your back, Sir! All down your back!"?

Maudie, whether you have subsided into the bosom of a man of substance from the meat markets or whether you have passed to a better but probably more unsatisfactory world, I send you greetings and thanks.

In that delectable establishment—upon the head of the proprietor of which be blessings, for he and it still live—you could get a perfectly grilled chop or steak, tender as a chicken for 7d.; "Toad-in-the-hole" cost 9d.; "Veg's" cost 1d. or 2d. per portion; French fried potatoes golden and crisp and fresh fried in fat instead of petroleum jelly, tuppence or thruppence. The sweets, all excellent and pure, were, I think, fourpence. The syrup pudding was a golden dream. It cost threepence. And the coffee!

I have eaten a whole fresh lobster there for the sum of one shilling. I have eaten genuine Dover sole (not the imitation catfish of the modern restaurant) at one shilling, the whole thick sole.

We had turkeys and chickens and geese, and never a portion—and mighty portions they were, too—at more than the shilling which was the outside limit of that establishment.

Lord Mayor's Day—'Is 'Ighness and the 'Oi Polloi

And oh! for the nights at the "Golden Grill," as I will call this prince of restaurants, when we were "staying late" at the office at fifteen pence the hour overtime, or, in lieu, "tea-money." Oh! for the dazzle of the incandescents upon the spotless tablecloths and the scent of the fried kippers or the smokiness of the haddock and the lightly poached egg, all at an inclusive cost of tenpence-halfpenny with a penny to Rose or Maud or Alice. Our host beams upon us from behind the high bar with his sleeves rolled up upon leg-of-mutton arms whilst his wife, an Englishwoman, benisons us. We are their children. They are our foster-parents.

Does anybody know to-day of a restaurant where you get a meal fit for a king at tenpence-halfpenny and where the owners are your father and mother?

In the words of Albert Chevalier: "I don't (sniff) fink!"

IX

BEFORE DEMOCRACY DIED

A COFFEE-STALL like a lighthouse in a November fog of London's Via Dolorosa—the Euston Road. Gentle-eyed Aaron Naptha breathing a benison upon the thick, white cups, to polish them lovingly with the hem of his white apron under the hanging flare that bears his name, behind him shining cups and plates and saucers, ranged in platoons. Piles of "doorsteps," thick white clumps of bread with a mere mention of butter—seductive "tiddlers" gleaming metallically upon the thick hunches—pyramids of cake, bilious and spotted like a new variety of erysipelas. . . .

Two o'clock booms muffled through the yellow pall, from the adjacent church—the one on the steps of which the artilleryman either murdered or was murdered . . . what does it matter? What can anything matter at midnight in the fog-blanket of the Euston Road?

In the semicircle of yellow there stands our little company, all sipping Aaron's hot "cawfee," and, when it "ran to it," nibbling our sardines or tiddlers.

There is a lady in feathers; an obese and generously alcoholic cabman, his sporty bowler very much on one side, his whip still in his red paw; "Hunchy Joe" the cab tout, one shoulder up and the other down; and a couple of rough-house men, one of them with a cauliflower ear gathered in the course of a not unblemished professional career. *And* a belated swell.

We all know one another—that is, excepting the toff,

who is trying to explain to Liza (that is the lady with the feathers) exactly how he got there.

He remembers with a painful distinctness having explained to a policeman (" aw'fly good fellars—the bobbies ") that he is a Stackpole—one of the original Stackpoles with one " o." That was after he came out of the Empire, where, as he says, impelled by a genial commissionaire, he did the two flights to the street " like a blessed cock-angel."

He doesn't know exactly how he found himself in the old " Lounge " on the first floor, where he had one or two and where he met a most delightful lady who knew his people.

After that, one gathers that his experiences of the evening were not so clearly defined or definable—all owing to the fog which he, unlike the rest of us, appears to regard as a personal enemy. " Damned old fog ! I hate him ! " For to the Londoner of that day, the fog was father and mother in one—friendly, comforting as a woollen blanket.

The lady in the feathers, with the philosophy born of the Euston Road and the fog, tells him to " cheer up, Bertie, you'll soon be dead—and it'll all be the same in a 'undred bloomin' years," what time she shares the coffee out of her cup with him as a sister. He says she is " a lady."

We are all friends there. The conversation has now become general under the influence of fog and coffee. It has turned upon the old everlasting of that day—Jack the Ripper. This gentleman has been the stand-by of conversation for a decade or more already, and the cabby, mounted and riding what is evidently a hobby, develops unsuspected powers of anatomizing and description bloodthirsty, to the dismay of the lady of feathers, who, however, in no sense takes it personally. Indeed, nobody there thinks of her in that way. " For we all have to live," the philosophy of the Road.

Out of the " London particular," now pea soup with glue admixture, there wander to the haven of our lighthouse the poor, harried birds of the night, and if fine feathers make fine birds, then these must once have been very fine birds indeed. For they all carry the palm-leaf hat with an ostrich farm on top.

Most of these ladies greet the mulatto with the thick ear-rings as " Aaron," and join in the conversation, which has shifted to the enormities of the Kaiser, to the poverty of the French physique and stamina (the Great War was not yet), and by sundry by-paths has straggled to the respective merits of Lord Salisbury and that Mr. Gladstone whose name is still that of the " Grand Old Man."

Here again, the last two ladies to join our ranks display unexpected powers of acerbity, not to say moroseness. One of them is, as she says, " a true blue Conservative," and when asked by her Gladstonian companion what a " Conservative " might be when it's at home, retorts with that sublimity which distinguished the " true blue " of that day: " A Conservative is one who con-serves, or pre-serves, his or her own opinions, and *never* changes." Obviously a determined character with the power to express it.

Fortunately, a diversion is here made by a bluff Yorkshireman, a regular " tyke " and, as one thinks, a farmer, who has been making a night of it and who, coming into our enchanted circle, asks:

" Hast tha got a good strong coop o' tea, la-a-d, or owt to eat? "

The last two ladies, who, poor things, have been walking up and down under the trees of the Endsleigh Gardens ever since 8 p.m., " for their bloomin' 'ealth," as one of them expresses it in the light fantasy of the craft, are gulping down the bright brown and sticky liquid that

Bank Holiday—At the Oval

Aaron calls " coffee " and gulping it on tick. For Aaron is benefactor in general to all sorts of people, and trusts as he is trusted. And we all have to live!

Whilst they are doing it, the light and airy badinage of two of the " rough house " gents upon the exact reasons of Peter Jackson's defeat of Frank Slavin and as to why John L's right failed to annihilate the darling of old Cockaigne, Charley Mitchell, has passed from the impersonal to the personal. Under the benign supervision of Aaron, who, before he was blinded, was perhaps the best middleweight in England, and who sees fair as between man and man, the two protagonists demonstrate *in corpore vili* what hitherto they have only sought to demonstrate by the vile word.

But the referee soon finds that it is no longer a case of seeing fair between man and man, but between woman and woman. For the last two ladies, carrying their political battle into a new arena, have taken violent sides with the rough-housers, and are now quite inextricably entangled in each other's hair and persons in a day when the after-the-war cynicism was unknown. For in those dear dead days beyond recall, people took sides about everything, from politics to prize-fighting. People were " serious " then.

There is a little Irish doctor, who really lives in Gower Street, but who has a strange and exclusive connection in the King's Cross district, who has unobtrusively joined us as we fall to rest again. As a former patron of the ring and a member of the " National Sporting," he often looks in as he passes to take his old friend Aaron by the hand. By this time, the rough-house gentlemen in that day of large forgivenesses have forgotten all thumps given and taken, over a friendly " cawfee," which they share with their fair partners, one of whom, as it turns out, is a client of the little Irish doctor.

Finally, to the commonwealth of our coffee-stall comes "The Bonecrusher."

The Bonecrusher has a fist like a piece of gnarled oak, the jaw of the old-timer, and a nose indescribable, because there is nothing to describe. He has an abnormal spread of shoulder and a pair of sledge-hammers that hang nearly to his knees—and he once fought Aaron for the middle-weight championship. He comes in out of the fog like some enormity bred of the sulphur, which has now closed in upon us so that not even the striking of the hours upon the church clocks can be heard. For those were fogs. Held before the face, the hand itself would sometimes be invisible, and when that hush-hush fell over London Town, it was to stifle all sound and movement.

The Crusher wipes the beads of fog and sweat from his forehead, for this is a wet, not a dry fog. He has, as we all know very well, but one eye—a fiery but kindly orb—the other he lost in a slight difference with a negro armed with a razor, which indeed is the cause of his retirement from the profession he had, if not "adorned," at least forsaken unscorned, and, as he himself says: "with knobs on." And now, of course he is fighting his twenty-round battle with soft-eyed Aaron Naptha once more, whilst we listen as we munch our doorsteps.

"Oh-yus. When you come up with your left peeper gone in the fifteenth—now, says I to meself: 'I've got yer.' You remember, Aaron. The ref had got into the blushin' ring and the toffs were sittin' dahn there as though a poker had been jammed dahn their bloomin' backs. Strike me pink! but you weathered that storm—though, how you did it, Gawd knows!"

Aaron is smiling softly and the dark blinded eyes that yet look as if they saw from behind themselves, are sighting towards his old antagonist, whose bone-crushing he had

weathered through twenty three-minute rounds, when fighting was fighting, to win the championship. It is beautiful to see these two look upon each other—it is to see the very milk of human kindliness oozing from four eyes, of which three are " dark " for ever.

There is a masterful tread, a tread with doom in it, and a certain tremor runs through our womankind.

" Oh ! gor' luv-a-ducks ! it's only Dinkey-do." This from the lady in the feathers, who adds, patronizingly: " Only ahr old friend, the slop."

" Our old friend " rolls propoise-like out of the " particular," which is standing out upon his glistening red face in great drops which drip from nose and chin, and run down into the patent " flea-band " of his tunic where it circles the bull neck. On the round good-natured head is a toppling helmet, in that day always a size too small, which he removes to mop his wet face with a red bandana handkerchief.

There was no " copper " like our copper. He is the king of the Road. He is the arbiter of quarrels and the occasional stern Rhadamanthus who takes the obstreperous off to the station on their road to " chokey "—" and mark you," as he says, " for their own good, not his own." Our bobby never yet " worked up " a case. He wouldn't know how to set about it.

With a " Good night all ! " and to me a special : " and how are you, Sir ? " the copper of a quarter of a century ago swallows a mug of hot coffee, pays his tuppence like a man, puts two doorsteps with two tiddlers between them (another thruppence) into his coat tails for contingencies, and is absorbed by the night amidst a chorus of " Good night, constable ! "

I am engaged in developing my own private particular theory about Jack the Ripper between bouts of what one

of the ladies describes as "a narsty cough" coming from the lady in the feathers, due to the fog or to consumption (epidemics didn't bother us much in the 'nineties for had we not our patent medicines?), when a low wail comes out of the fog. It seems to come from where the long high houses stand on our left, or where we think our left may be, for we have, all of us, long since lost direction.

This we forget—that is, the three ladies, the cabby, the Tyke, the Bonecrusher, the belated swell, and Aaron—in the descriptive and analytical eloquence which I have loosed upon my friends, who listen to me with that extraordinary instinctive respect of the end of last century for the man with pretence to education or breeding. For there was then a "democracy" of which modern democracy knoweth nothing—perhaps it was a democracy of spirit as opposed to a democracy of politics. I do not know.

When all have contributed their quota to the argument, we find that we have reached a joint and satisfactory conclusion as to the identity and method of Jack, who has just made one of his periodical appearances, that is, all excepting the little doctor, who has gone off into the fog to find another patient, and the belated swell, who is about to be sent home with a friendly "So long, Bertie. See you next week and *you've* had quite as much as is food for you and fanks for the loan of the five bob," for the gentleman has been generous to beauty in distress. It is only then that we realize for the first time that the wail that came out of the circumambient has risen to a cry with such despair and terror in the heart of it as might have come from a *banshee*, if banshees ever were found in the Euston Road.

We try not to take any notice, for in the Euston Road that was, you didn't bat an eyelid even for murder. It "wasn't the thing." Liza, strong in the etiquette of the

Road, is discussing the Ripper murders with as much detachment and sangfroid as though they were no earthly concern of hers, when the yellow pall is torn once more by shrieks which defy even the unwritten law that runs: "We all have to live."

"Poor thing! I expect her bloke has been and gone and done the dirty on 'er," says Liza, as a weak concession to the cries. But nobody moves. It is nobody's business.

I, budding novelist, and ready to turn anything from murder to motherhood into black and white, lope off into the fog. It seems to be lifting, for I can see that awful line of damnèd houses on the left, running up towards the corner of Tottenham Court Road, with their long narrow approaches of stones and broken glass, of weeds and dead and dying cats—the gardens where only Dead Sea apples grow.

On the step of a house at the end of one of these gardens of dead hopes, a girl is sitting in the dreadful cold of the November night, and she was as naked as the day she came out from her mother. "I haven't done owt," she wails in a broad homely northern accent inexpressibly shocking in that place.

A window is thrown up above her and out from the blackened hole there comes first, a dirty chemise, then a pair of drawers, stockings, a pair of boots, stays, and a bedraggled dress. Broken-hearted, she gathers them up and proceeds to make her toilet in that bitterness. And then the fog had closed down again upon the Road, to swallow the girl and her clothes—even the house itself.

But the girl will not leave me. She is frightened, she says. But of whom or what I do not ask.

So we two hark back together to the gold of the little haven, where we are received as wanderers returned.

Aaron pours out a steaming cup of his "cawfee," to hand

it without a word to the lass from the North. The red-faced cabby presses a doorstep upon her whilst the other three ladies of light gather about her to comfort her and to hush the sobs which still break from her. The Bonecrusher says genially that he'll be damned and gives her something that looks like a shilling, and the Yorkshire farmer asks her if she " cooms fra Bradford." He had a girl like her, once.

The fog has shut down upon us again, to take us all into its soft arms—there in our little lighthouse of hope and good company.

A friendly world. A friendly age.

X

THE LOST ART OF ENJOYING ONESELF

It will be said by a cynical youth which has never been young and which will never be old that when comparisons are made between a quarter of a century ago and to-day they are the comparisons of middle-age, and that middle-age, like old-age, has always been critical and querulous.

I do not think that modern cynical youth will be right. Each age has its own joys and sorrows, its own advantages and shortcomings. Nineteen hundred and twenty-seven has leaped more than a hundred years from 1900 in some things—in dress and education for instance, as in the production of a flower of sensitive, visioned, younger people, a thinking if tiny minority that is perhaps finer than anything that has yet shown itself. . . . Yet there are things that 1900 could teach 1927. One of them, the art of enjoyment. The other, a corollary—the art of youth.

For it often seems to me that I, in my forties, am younger than the aged youths of both sexes I so often watch unbeknownst. Some of us have more of the joy of life within us, more of the appreciation, and certainly more of enthusiasm. Above all, we have more of the stuff that drives the explosive engine of life itself—passion.

For this is not a passionate age. The Great War saw to that. Enthusiasm is " bad form." Youth is conservative and the pioneers of lost causes are middle-aged or even " old." Although, indeed, the years a man has lived has nothing to do with youth.

In the 'nineties and early nineteen-hundreds, we were passionate about all sorts of things. About the larger, such as democracy and death. About the smaller—vegetarianism, teetotallism, and the other "isms." And about those things that are both great and small—about one another. There was then a passion of life which has never been recaptured.

What body of us to-day could, for example, reproduce a Mafeking Night? Which one of us to-day can "maffick"—that word born in the hot womb of the turn of the century? Which of us really, and at heart, cares a hoot whether Lloyd George or Stanley Baldwin or Ramsay MacDonald are in or out of power, whether a man marries one or twenty-one wives, or whether his wife is Nonconformist or "Church" or Plymouth Brother?

Let the reader answer for himself or herself.

In those days, East met West. And yet each "knew his place," the boast of the time. The Class War was not, and Lenin had not yet stuck his formidable muzzle into the map of Europe. When the 'ard an' 'orny 'anded son of toil, who then really had existence that was concrete demonstrable rather than abstract political, swaying dizzily down Piccadilly upon occasions of national ebullition on top of the world, saw the glowing half-moon of the Jockey Club or the men and women on the balconies of Northumberland Avenue or Pall Mall, it was with a "Good luck to 'em!" in a day when envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness was not. No single unit of that laughing, howling crowd was ever haunted by a doubt that the backbone of England was her peerage and that noblemen acted nobly. Mutual trust and mutual good feeling, however deboshed and even shattered at time, alone made that democracy of East and West possible.

And the sheer joy of living of a day of superfluous passionate energy! You would see bevies of 'Arrys and

Bank Holiday—On Hampstead Heath

Bank Holiday—In Epping Forest

'Arriets in these national demonstrations burst out from the congestion of the pavements to jig themselves into forgetfulness of the sterner realities of Bermondsey or Bethnal Green as they " set " to one another in a saturnalia of howl and mouth organ. Slums there were, but there was probably more joy to the square foot of a Limehouse alley or a street corner in the New Cut than in an acre of the awful bourgeois workingdom of to-day, when the working man has become the thing he set out to displace.

When 'Arry and 'Arriet fearfully and wonderfully arrayed (also part of that joy of life) went for their Easter Monday to " 'Ampstead 'Eath " or Epping Forest, they made the morn horrific with their howlings and the nights pleasantly hideous with their caterwaulings. They drank " four-'arf " like Trojans and they footed it like inebriated Indians, whom indeed what with their feathers and war-paint, they resembled in more senses than one. But if they did so, they did so because they had to let off steam somehow—and steam they *had* to let off.

In my bedroom near Epping Forest upon a fine Bank Holiday morning, I would be awakened by the sounds of that national instrument, the mouth organ, playing " Daisy Bell " or " Little Dolly Daydream," to be followed by that other national instrument—the cornet, as it lachrymosely assassinated " Comrades " or " The Miner's Dream of Home."

Up on the broad white highway, and the advance guard of the exodus from London would come charging down the road. Perhaps a tiny donkey drawing a barrow upon which sat pa and ma and four or five of the " kids." The moke fairly vomiting gay streamers; pa, not yet worked up, in pearlies, and his wife glorious in silk, satin and feather.

Then a whooping band of cyclists, nondescripts, upon

machines hired for the day and held together only by grit and the grace of God. Then a coal cart, full of costers instead of coals, all letting themselves go upon mouth organ and exchanging the most delightful pleasantries with the passer-by, whom they would address indiscriminately as "What ho! me lord duke!" or as "Wot cher, old fly-by-night!" just as they felt, for they were no respecters of persons, not even at this early hour.

Then a *char-à-banc* with the cornetist sitting on the extreme left of the driver, with instrument on hip or shattering the morning with melodious brayings, and behind in the well, soberly attired gentlemen in hard, hot bowlers, broadcloth, and a nosegay. A joyous company.

And all down that fabulous way of the joy of life would be dotted the public-houses, at each of which it was essential, if only as a matter of etiquette and good fellowship, for the joyous company to "pull up and have one." First half-pint to the cornetist, the tribute of amateur to pro, rather than of vice to virtue, for the cornetist often had a very very red nose. And then the coyness of the ladies, not long out of bed and with their beauty sleep still hanging lightly over them:

"Oh, come orn, 'Liza, and be a pal. Wot'll y'ave?"

And the lady's virtuous: "Sperits. No. Tom! Not for me. And *so* early in the morning. . . . Well, just this once, and it Benk 'Oliday, I don't mind if I do."

There they go down the end of the nineteenth century from "The Old House at Home" to the "Napier Arms" and from "The Duke of Wellington" to "The Rising Sun" —the sun that is shining upon them on their long trek to Epping or even as far afield as Ongar.

All the fun of the fair.

Coco-nut shies and Aunt Sallies, the nuts firmly fixed on

so that dynamite would not have dislodged the "orl milky"—and oh! the joy when you dotted 'em on the crumpet and saw the milk fly. Booths and side-shows set up in all sorts of ill-considered places where you could see anything from the Boneless Wonder turn his vertebræ inside out to Fat Ladies and Living Skeletons.

All the fun of the fair.

And the long and dusty day draws to its close. But does the nineteenth century joy of life draw to *its* close? Not on your life!

Back they come in the coolth of the day, their honours thick upon them. Coco-nuts won at fearful odds; bottles of whisky when you got a bottle of the best at three-and-six the bottle picked up at any old place; hats askew upon heads awry; the kids either asleep or howling—the only two conditions possible at this stage of the day, but still "going it" and the sleeping ones getting up strength for the victorious morrows. Down the long long trail from Epping, winding the length of the white ribbon, the mokes are pulling their variegated loads and the ponies happily blown from a plethora of sugar and carrots, are putting themselves to the collar and the *char-à-bancs* drawn by their splendid duets, or even sometimes, in sheer gorgeousness, by a quartette, almost like a coach and four, are wobbling wearily along, what time their freights lift their voices in "I'll be your Valentine, if you'll be mine" or the immortal "Because I love you," written by Mr. Charles Horwitz and composed by Mr. F. V. Bowers:

> At night I sit alone and dream
> Of days when you were always near,
> When both our lives were happy, dear.
> I would I knew where you can be,
> I trust your heart is still the same.
> When nature sleeps, and all is still,
> I whisper fondly one sweet name. . . .

If when we meet, some distant day,
And then, I learn you've not grown cold,
The sun for me will shine again,
My life be happy, as of old. . . .

The eternal determination to have happiness as the imperishable birthright of man, bursting into the chorus that has become a pæan of praise and glorification of life :

Be-kaw-aw-se, I love yer !
Be-kaw-kaw-kawse, I love yer !
My eownly one regret,
Since then, we've nev-ev-er met :
Be-kaw-se I love you !
Be-kaw-kaw-kawse I love you !
Yes, my 'art is yours,
Be-kaw-se I love you !

The gentlemen have their arms around the ladies' waists. The ladies have removed their feathered creations the more to be at ease upon the bosoms of the gentlemen aforesaid, and carry them in their laps. The cornetist throbs forth his brassy soul into the night, causing the birds unknowing as to night or day, to stir uneasily in the adjacent forest and the bats to flutter overhead in the twitterlight.

But love's old sweet song holds its way rejoicingly through a world that can still love and still hold the romance of life. Butcher, baker, and candlestick maker : coster and clerk and kids : cyclist, soldier and sailor—they all reel through the night, through the London night, joyous companions every one.

XI

A NIGHT UP THE RIVER

So we pass from the cruder though none the less soul-satisfying joys of the " masses " to those of the " classes "—to one of those serener quieter joys with which the London night in those days was impregnate.

You never said: " I'm going on, or down the river." You always said " up " the river. " Up " towards some mysterious source of happiness to find the blue bird with Florrie or Edna or Maud.

The river for thousands of " wet bobs " was the source of all enjoyment, and each wet bob had his or her " special particular." It might be Hampton Court, a favourite haunt, or it might be Eel Pie Island, or it might be Richmond, then a fair and stately lady, her garments unsullied by the camp-followers of the new bourgeoisie, undecked by ladies of light, as unplagued by the riff-raff, the all-comprehending word of the 'nineties. For how many thousands has not Richmond Bridge been the alpha of romance and that secluded backwater somewhere about Hampton Court the cradle of hidden dreams ?

Of course, if you were adventurous and with a pretty long purse, you ventured as far as Staines or Windsor, or even took the Great Western to Pangbourne. But Richmond and Hampton Court, once the abode of kings and queens, were for you if you were true Londoner, the gentle forcing-bed of romance.

You remember how you fell out of one nightmarish dream

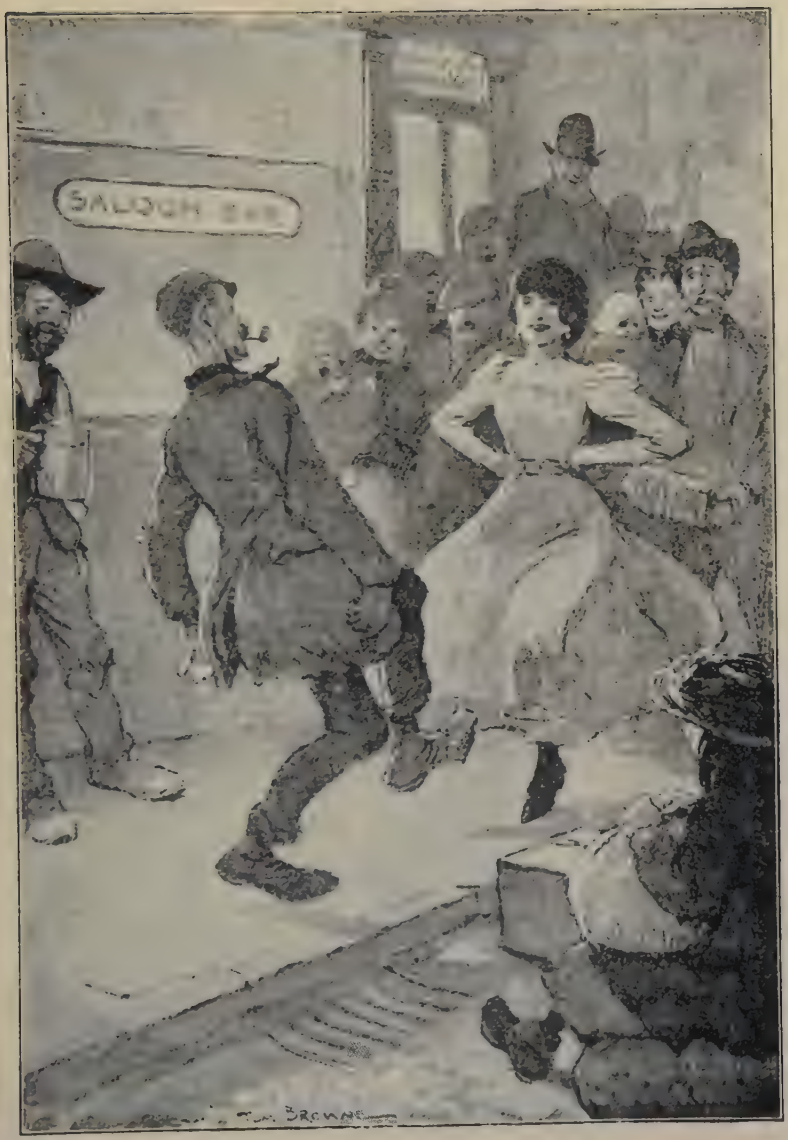
into another the night before the Bank Holiday? You remember how the thought that Ethel or Gladys was waiting for you in the morning at Waterloo or Hammersmith or Charing Cross would keep you tentered upon your uneasy bed until the small hours when you fell first into a drowse, then into a torpor like the Seven Sleepers all in one and woke in that uneasy No Man's Land 'twixt wake and sleep, wondering what enormity you had committed . . . and then remembered. Thank the stars! not seven o'clock yet and a sunny morning.

So into the carefully washed and strangely abbreviated flannels in a day when dry-cleaning was almost known . . . and French—therefore doubtful. Into the brown boots polished with satiny Meltonian, for your white canvas shoes with the brown straps you have done up last night in a piece of brown paper and white string, for to wear such sublimities through the streets would be swanking it a bit too thick "and no fellow *would*." It is not even inconceivable that you wear a stiff white-fronted shirt with stiff cuffs, and of course you subdue the glory of the flannels with your ordinary lounge coat (blazers in the streets are also a bit too thick). And you are not a bounder.

Your straw boater has a gorgeous green and white band and even a double brim, but a brim that is not much more than a ledge. The shallow dish-shaped boaters with the wide brims are not yet.

Your tie is Eton or Harrow, and you do your best to live up to it even though you really went to a cheap (inclusive rather than exclusive) grammar school at £30 a year near London, for to look like a 'varsity man is the very aim and acme of gentility. About your manly waist you have a pale-blue silk belt held by a snake buckle, and with a running metal slip.

So attired, after a hasty breakfast in which the London



"The Lost Art of Enjoying Oneself"

egg sticks half-way down your throat, you proceed from your house in the Laburnum Road, Balham, or was it Tooting or Clapham?—I rather think it was Chiswick—to Hammersmith.

Is she there? She is. She isn't. Oh God! why can't girls treat a fellow decently? Joy! she *is* there. Ooh! Ethel or Maud or Mabel, for your river loves are apt to be transmigratory.

And look at her! Look at her sailor hat with the broad brim and the white band. Look at her fuzzy-wuzzy hair and the freckles on her dear nose. Look at her grey eyes—and when the London girl of that day had grey eyes they were greyer than the mists that haunt the slopes of Connemara. And now it *is* Maud.

Look at Maud's white washing dress with the half-dozen frills, coming well down over her tootsy-wootsies. Look at her white cotton gloves, for a bare hand would be indecent as a bare leg. Look at the silver belt (at least, let's hope it is silver, for you bought it off a pawnbroker in the city, who satisfactorily explained the absence of the Lion on the buckles)—look, I say, at the silver belt encircling her tightly-laced-in waist with the slight protuberance underneath where the stays stick out. And look at Maud's brown shoes with sensible low heels—(none of your peg-tops twenty-five years ago)—but with a little protuberance over the joint of the big and the outside of the little toe. And methinks, despite the low heels, she limps a little, although you and she would rather die than acknowledge it.

In her gloved hand she carries a small, a very small basket with sandwiches and an iron pin running along the top to hold the lid down. "Ham," rest assured, with plenty of mustard on and laid between the indescribably sandy bread of that period, for there has been no baking since Saturday—the day before yesterday.

As for you, you got your mother to "put you up" the surprise packet which you carry gingerly by one string in the hand which hasn't got the blazer and the shoes. And won't Maud be pleased when she sees the jam sandwiches unpacked. For if she has ham, you have jam, the alternative in that Sahara of eating and drinking.

"Drink?" Oh, for drink you will depend upon the "Good places for teas!" only they, dash it all! don't care too much about people who bring their eatables, and you would rather be dragged in pieces by wild horses than produce your own eatables and order tea *alone*. Again, no fellow would. Eating and drinking in the 'nineties is a sort of sacred heart, hedged in by all kinds of etiquette, to be indulged in secret.

And so you run into the Richmond terminus, with two or three dozen other couples also out for a day on the river. There is the clock as it is to-day and as it will be fifty years from now when we are all in our graves. Only it is a steam and not electric engine which brings you in. "Puff-puff. Puff-puff." How friendly it sounds. None of your stealthy, gliding, live-rail, in it remoteness and death. Up the stairs, out of the station and then to the left, along George Street, up the hill, turn to the right and down the steps of the old bridge.

And what a crowd there is about you—all on pleasure bent, for the Bank Holiday. The girls—"young ladies," I mean—are in buns or plaits with a vague tendency to river attire sternly repressed. There are little lifts on the shoulders and leg-of-mutton sleeves with a suggestion of protuberance at the small of the back, due partly to the eighteen-inch stays and partly to the numerous petticoats in which they sweltered through a long summer's day. For a woman's respectability was strictly conditioned by the thickness and quantity of her underclothes, unless she were a skirt dancer

On the River
"I wonder, Emma, if we'll always glide along the stream of life as smoothly as we now float down the Thames?'
"It will depend on who is captain."

Bank Holiday—On the River

or a light o' love, in which case she bloomed in a lingerie of a frothing superfluity.

This is the dread moment of the day. Before Maudie, you pose as incipient millionaire, although you are actually in receipt of twenty-five bob a week in an office near the Bank. So it is that she discreetly retires a little to one side, whilst you do the dark and dirty work with the boatman.

Seven shillings and sixpence for the day! and for a skiff only. Twelve shillings and sixpence for a punt. Extortion! What is the world coming to! "And an extra cushion, guv'nor."

You fight him genteelly, but "the extra cushion," conjuring up as it does dreams of harem-like luxury, does the trick. And "it is a do," and in a double sense. (If you could only have seen the day when river pirates would ask you unblushingly one and even two pounds for a punt for the day. But, thank God! some things are discreetly veiled from us.)

So you hand Maud into the punt (you are "going regardless") and Maud does the little regulation scream, without which no lady was a lady, as with her frills, flounces, furbelows, tantalizingly entangled, she wobbles into the bottom of the punt. You grasp your punt pole with resolution, praying to your gods the while that you have not forgotten how to punt and that the river may not be deep in these parts, and you are off in your golden argosy.

But why paint the day? That day of heat and perspiration. You have sweated your white front into a concertina. You have made concessions to heat by first removing your lounge coat—this fifty yards from the start and under Maudie's coy pleadings "not to take it out of yourself too much" and you wondering that womanhood can be so bold. For there is a delicious sense of freedom and

even of licence in this permission. You put on your blazer (the claret and green of an undesignated college of some unknown university, you have been assured by the man in the city outfitter's), but as the colour begins to come through and to turn your spotless shirt also into claret and green, you doff this—again that delicious sense of licence as Maudie bids you do it, dashed only by that stain.

You now have fallen one step further from the conventions, but this not for some hours. You have loosened your cuff links and have rolled up your stiff shirt sleeves upon your manly arms, blushing as you note your hairiness in the sunshine. A little later, upon the plea that you see a fellow you know on the river bank, you have behind a friendly oak, exchanged your boots for your shoes, and return comparatively dazzling to your inamorata who " misters " you all through in a time when maidenhood was indeed modesty.

It is " Oh, Mr. Primrose," and " Yes, Mr. Primrose," and " Oh, neow ! couldn't possibly do that, Mr. Primrose." For you come from a boastfully decayed and therefore presumably distinguished family, and Miss Maudie Butterwort, in that day of subtle social distinction, feels the gulf that separates her, only a Butterwort, and a denizen of Clapham Junction, from a Primrose who lives in Chiswick, not so far from Strand-on-the-Green, when he is at home. You, of course, frantic with love, chivalrously waive all such artificial distinction, for you are packed to the roof of your giddy head with the dawning democracy of the time and isn't one gal as good as another, and there is something from Messieurs Gilbert and Sullivan about as true a heart beating in Mayfair as in Seven Dials, though neither they nor you really believe it.

And you, of course, would no more dream of calling her " Maudie " than you would cut your throat, at least not

yet, for you have not yet filled yourself and herself up with hot tea—a desperate, if spirituai drink.

It is only when " the posteriors of the day which the rude multitude call the afternoon " have descended over the face of the river, and, guided doubtless by roguish, rosy Cupid himself, you have found your way to the labyrinth of lovers of which I have spoken, that the beauteous and rather distant Miss Butterwort relaxes slightly. She has even removed her straw boater and her gloves. (Of course, these she had originally removed when you landed on that island and ordered " two teas at 1s. the head," when she went " to do herself up." But she had, after tea, carefully replaced them again.)

You have been face to face in the punt, you in the stern and she amidships, with a decent distance between you and certainly with no intention on your part of decreasing it, for Miss Butterwort seems as unapproachable and as distant as Saturn—or Venus, more distant still. She has, however, dropped the " Mister " and has passed into a vague " you."

Now, because you are both young and youth is really the same in all ages, you do in some mysterious way find yourself in sweet juxtaposition to your friend. She is calling you " Harry " and you are calling her " Maudie." For thus does river magic act, even in the 'nineties.

The sun has sunk in a globe of red passion, and you can almost hear it hiss as it passes down through the London haze, down through the blue of the London smoke into the face of Father Thames to turn it into purple and gold.

Outside your nest, a punt passes with two gents in black faces and banjoes, bones and tambourine, with which they invade the night what time they carol Tosti's " Venetian Song " :

The night wind sighs,
Our vessel flies
Across the dark lagoon—
The City sleeps
And well she keeps
Her watch, the gentle moon. . . .

Your hands seek each other blindly under the influence of the banjo and the balm, and you thrill to the gentle pressure. . . .

For with her light,
She guides our flight
Across the silver sea—
We are alone,
The world, my own,
Doth hold but you and me
. . . but you and me.

Ecstatic, you feel the truth of those words, for your intentions, sometimes so unlike the intentions of an age twenty-five years later, when love and licence have got slightly mixed and divorce has become the commonplace of life, are strictly honourable and you know in that moment that Maudie Butterwort is the only girl in the world for you and that you were meant for each other ever since the evening star swinging low above was placed there, a lamp in the heavens, to guide all true lovers.

Past your hiding-place, you hear the swish of the paddles of other happy lovers and you catch sight of gentlemen in side whiskers and even an occasional bearded gondolier poling against the stars, as Charon-like, he ferries his fair freight along the silvery ways.

Very proper and straight-backed some of them, God help them, in white chokers! as they sit on the sterns of their punts and wield their paddles to send the water flashing under the starlight from where you peer at them in the delicious certainty that you can see but not be seen.

No hoot of mordant motor-car breaks the stillness, only the hoot of the horned owl which flies athwart the moon. Already you have both watched a blue heron wing her stately way across a star and have felt in that flight all the loneliness and all the joy of life and of love.

There are no yells of road-hogs as they career to the doom of themselves and their victims, nor is the night cachinnatory with the howl of the jazz-fiend—not even the tinniness of a phonograph, for music is not yet machine made. No thunder of four-ton buses shaking old Richmond Bridge to its foundations as these pachyderms roll over it, the twentieth rolling over the nineteenth century. But the night is murmurous with sweet sound, for a melodeon is playing " Love's Old Sweet Song " and a mouth organ is wheezing out incomprehensible melodies that in the fainted distance lose their harsher contours in the alchemy of night.

Everyone respects your seclusion. There is no blatant mooring of punts of other lovers cheek by jowl with your fabled craft. Live and let live. Love and let love.

Under that hush, even the infrequent 'Arry and 'Arriet are stilled and their voices, raucous through the day, lowered as in a cathedral.

Miss Butterwort is now reclining well within your bare and muscular arms (are you not a disciple of Sandow ?) and rests her soft cheek against the armour of your shirt front, now thanks be ! without a collar, for under the gentle laxative of night you have let it go hellwards with so many other things.

The night draws on and a little wind-ripple on the water brings to you both chill realization of time. Miss Butterwort, who all at once and for no considered reason has become distant again with a tendency to " Mister " you, lifts her fair body a little, shakes out herself and her frills, and says : " Good gracious me ! it must be nearly midnight and what

will mama say ? " And there seem to be tears in her eyes there under the stars.

You don't know what mama will say and you don't much care. You have had the night of your life and you don't mind if it snows. " Youth's a stuff will not endure," and " what's to come is still unsure," but you and Maudie have had your hour.

And yet, and yet, with the little chill wind rising, there is a sense of desolation and incompleteness—that sense of unfruition of all things human, even of a Thames idyll on a summer night. And for one incredible instant, you wonder if you ever *will* marry Maudie ?

The lanterns are shining on the painted waters, and a nightingale at the critical moment has burst forth into a flood of song from the grove behind you. Glug-glug-glug-glug. There *is* love in the world.

And so you glide down-stream past the Chinese lanterns, down-stream past the white flounces of the girls lying in the bottom of the boats, and you catch the sound of tenor voice singing " Two eyes of grey."

> Two eyes of grey,
> That used to be so bright—
> What is the shadow veiling all your light ? . . .

It is that sadness again, and Maudie's eyes are grey.

> Why do the tears usurp the place,
> Of just the sweetest light I ever saw
> In any woman's face ?
> Two sad grey eyes so tired and desolate. . . .

But there is the single golden light by the landing-stage and the dark figure in the background waiting—waiting for your boat in the London night.

" A hour hover yer time, guv'nor. But wot's the odds so long as you're happy, sir and miss ? We're only young once."

Only young once.

XII

MAFEKING NIGHT

"Wot price, old Krüger!" "Git yer 'air cut!" And the enquiry-expostulatory that after thirty years is still with us: "*W'ere* did you get that 'at?" Cat-calls. Screams. Howls. And in the distance, Leicester Square way, three most tremendous cheers, followed by groans and hisses that rush across the Circus like a mighty wind.

For it is Mafeking Night once more, and London, in the vernacular of the time, "has gone off its rocker." And the art of enjoying oneself had not, in the year of the Boer War yet become a lost art. People to-day *play* at enjoyment. In 1900, they enjoyed themselves. That is the difference.

In the London of the turn of the century, the Boer War seemed in the beginning but a slightly enlarged version of one of the constant little tribal wars on the North-Western frontier of India. To the Londoner, Old Man Krüger, who led the Boers as Moses led the Children of Israel, was but a sort of Afghan chieftain, white instead of brown, and his commandos not much more than so many savages—"Dutchmen," that word of contempt of thirty years ago.

But as the war drew on and the "slim" Boer commandos looked as little likely to be rounded up as the springboks of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, people at home began to be anxious.

There had been the "black week" of December with the disasters of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso. It was then the nation turned to two saviours, as unlike as men

could well be—Kitchener—what a steel-eyed colossus he was as I remember him!—and the diminutive "Bobs," otherwise Lord Roberts, the little white-haired kindly veteran of a hundred fights.

The Boers gave the British Empire its first fright. But nothing frightened the Empire so much as the long-drawn-out siege of Mafeking, the little town in Bechuanaland famous as the starting-place of the Jameson Raid of five years before, when "Dr. Jim" was the hero of the man-in-the-street and the German Emperor's congratulatory telegram to President Krüger had set Europe by the ears.

Baden Powell (affectionately known as "B.P.") was in command, and from October, 1899 to May, 1900, when it was relieved by Colonel Mahon, although each day it had been expected to fall, it resisted all attempts by the Boers to take it.

When the news was flashed on May 18th that the harassed little town had been saved on the previous day, London just went mad. Never before, and certainly never since, has there been seen the like of that frenzy, for those were days before the after-the-Great-War cynicism had eaten its way into the national vitals to sap that self-assurance which had helped John Bull over so many steep hurdles.

If time could be turned back a quarter of a century and the Londoner of our day could see the swaying howling crowds that filled the West End that Mafeking night, they would believe that London had been taken by assault by some excitable Latin Power. For the tradition of "the excitable Latin" still persists from the Mafeking period when the Frenchman was a music-hall joke and England not only ruled the waves but the world.

It is true that the average citizen knew nothing and cared less about "the bloody British Empire," as it was sometimes half contemptuously, half affectionately referred

to, but when it came to Mafeking or Majuba—why then he discovered a violence of feeling and an exhibitionism which would make his son to-day clap him into a madhouse.

Persistently loyal to the Throne, of course, he had always been, as he would show upon national occasion like that of the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of York, now King George and Queen Mary, a night when I remember being carried from the Mansion House to this end of Cheapside, my feet touching the ground perhaps once or twice. But the Throne was one thing—the Empire quite other.

Through the streets of the City as of the West End that night of Mafeking, dragged the suck and flow of delirious crowds, grey-dressed but colour-splashed, their sign "the tickler," and the motto of each victorious wielder there *in hoc signo vinces*. Over their heads, those seductive tickling trifles, like foreshortened feather-brushes, seemed to catch you in the back of the nostrils and sent a delightful titillation down to the soles of your feet, especially when wielded by one of the fair sex.

And "fair" they were in their own buxom brazen way, the female Maffickers, bearing on their heads great sweeping hats crowned with ostrich plumes that cost even in a day when "a quid was a quid," a guinea the plume, with the plumes waving the length of Piccadilly, as indeed they were waving the length of London, east and west.

White-faced, dark-eyed girls, sheathed in a black satin that could not be bought to-day for those same quids. Girls with bounteous bosoms (what *has* become of the nineteenth century bosom?) inexorably and decently hemmed within the rigidity of the universal "stays," with their steel and whalebone, the top line of which could be seen beneath the dress. Girls in serried flounces that swung from tiny waist over more than doubtful boots, for the boot of the Mafficker was her weak point. Not her outer layers of

underwear so to speak, for the young ladies "doing Lottie Collins" on the pavement betray a variety of silken petticoat bewildering and dazzling. Farther, we will not go, because we dare not. The deeper mysteries would not always bear inspection.

But if lusty womanhood did not wash then so much as to-day, it enjoyed itself more.

To our modern eyes, looking down upon that scene of a quarter of a century ago, as though it were the cinematograph which had just begun to shiver before our astonied eyes, the "donahs" may seem inebriated. They are not. They are only enthusiastic. Glassy with beads, their costly silk and satin dresses shining under the arc-lights, bevies of them keep breaking from the press with their jigging escorts to execute that *pas de deux*, or double-shuffle, which, like the donahs themselves, seems to have passed for ever.

Iridescent with mother of pearl laid heavily on their pancake caps and skirted coats with big square poacher's pockets sewn on the outside, these escorts lightly exchange hats and badinage with their fair partners, whilst respectable citizens and "toffs" in monocles look on in high approval.

But the glory of the 'Enery 'Awkins of that day was his "trahsers," with square button-up flap fronts fitting skin tight as far as the knees and "cut saucy rahnd the kicksies." That is to say, expanding into generous proportions at the ankles like a pair of blunderbusses or bells, with the legs and feet as tongues. And how the East End gent of Mafeking Night did move his feet in those trousers!

These magnificent draperies are, as you see, covered with pearlies down the side, and "the Nipper," a pearly imitation of his father, is carried shoulder high whilst his mother and adoring aunties scream their hearts out in the only way that the coster of that day knew of expressing *joie de vivre*.

There we swing, a million of us, manipulating our

ticklers, turning our rattles, and blowing upon those coiled paper springs that would shoot out as unexpectedly as Jim Corbett's then famous left. You drove them into the face of auntie or father or Mabel or Maud or Ethel, names then greatly favoured. You jigged as you shouted and blew upon pink and white tuppenny trumpets adorned with silvery angels' hair.

"Duke's son, cook's son, son of a belted earl," you all swung together in a democracy which will never be again.

"Baa-baa-baa-baa!" went the tin trumpets. "Whe-ee-zzz!" went the blow-springs. "Krak-a-krak-a-krak-a-krak!" went the rattles, through it all "killing Krüger with your mouth."

But that night of May, it is a much more sober headgear that dominates the riot. For the top hat stands up quietly victorious in a time when the only garb possible for the super-male is the high tubular "topper" and frock-coat.

When the summer night drew down on London Town, it was to find topper and pearly dancing together and London in delirium. Big white-fronted Johnnies, town bucks in capes and canes, their toppers on the backs of their heads, capered tentatively with Donahs from the East End. Ordinarily staid gentlemen in their seventies could be seen flourishing bottles of some shining substance out of which they invited all and sundry to refresh. And big genial policemen, "for this night only" ignoring the fandangoes being danced to the excruciating inconvenience of their surroundings, pretended to marshal London's lunatic asylum.

And through it all, the scent of the horse-dung, that peculiar potent scent of the London night. Oh! for its magic once again.

Piccadilly Circus is now a whirlpool, with the famous "Mer-

cury," actually Eros, never dreaming of flights to the Embankment, perched high above, regarded with national affection by a mob that doesn't even know that he *is* Eros. For popular education is not yet, and Socialism itself but a bad joke, a word never to be mentioned in the newspapers.

That night of a spring madness, Joe Chamberlain is the national god—a god in a monocle, and his perky nose, brilliantined hair, and sharp screwed-up eye, stares at us from every shop window, and "Three cheers for Joe!" as also that expression to indicate extreme artfulness: "Not for Joseph!" is upon many a lip this night.

Every now and then, you hear the ominous word "Little Englander," and then a name that is one day to resound across a world at war—"Lloyd George." And then a storm of booing, punctuated by hisses that makes one think the Circus full of wild geese. For the rising young Welsh solicitor was already making himself feared and loved at Westminster, and "the Radical" was still a power in the realm. The great Liberal Party, which stood for the industrial interests, was then the only possible alternative to the great Conservative, which stood for the landed interests —but the radical wing of the Liberals was suspect at this moment. Little Englanders!

But in all that crowd, no man shouts for Labour or represents Labour. A single man in a cloth cap of the name of Keir Hardie has, it is true, walked into the House of Commons "to the extreme disgust of all right-thinking people." But a Labour Party was as unthinkable as a Russian Revolution or an Emperor of Germany in exile.

But the illuminations! Ah! the illuminations—the thing which thousands of fathers and mothers have brought their little ones to see, despite the dangers of the crowds.

The illuminations were illuminations in a day when gas

Piccadilly Circus in the 'Nineties

still challenged electric light. And it seems to me, looking back, that there was a chastened softened beauty about the gas jets that ran along the West End façades in blue and gold ripples that night of May, that the harder electric never had and never will have.

There are great shields made of faceted glass in blue and green and rose outside the Jockey Club and the clubs of Northumberland Avenue, to make beautiful the London night. And when a little wind comes, as little winds will, it runs the length of the gas jets to blow them out for a moment, only, the next, for them to re-light themselves, to the quiet delight of the crowds.

And when we speak of crowds, we speak of something that our day does not know. Whether it was that people "scrouged" more or that more people "demonstrated," this deponent sayeth not, but in those days a crowd was a thing fierce and palpitant. Yet a good-humoured crowd, good-humoured in the English way, in the spirit of live and let live that the people of England have made their own.

Standing that night, a little out from the maelstrom on the Piccadilly pavement, I saw a big policeman take a man out of the crowd who was pushing rather more than necessary, admonish him, and then with a thrust put him back again as though he had been a doll. For the "bobby" is the one thing that doesn't change—he is the nation's pride and glory.

Talking about the nation's pride and glory—what about the Tommy Atkinses and the Jack Tars who give colour to the crowd, local colour—sometimes too much local colour, when they have been having something slightly stronger than tea in one of those cosy little pubs just off the Circus?

There is as much difference between the big-chested well set-up Tommy of Mafeking Night, tightly buttoned into

his red tunic and, as I remember, still without the ugly German forage cap like a flattened pudding, and the pale artistic-looking youth of to-day in khaki, as between a tiger and a greyhound.

I may exaggerate, but it seems to me that the man about whom all London was singing:

> We takes him from the city and the plough;
> We set him in a uniform so neat;
> We teach him to uphold his manly brow,
> And where and how and when to place his feet.

was a splendid fellow and a great fighting man. Of course he knew nothing of poison gas and aeroplanes, I admit, and might have "got the jim-jams" if he had seen such nightmares . . . but then, again, he might not.

But this poor wretch, except on a Mafeking Night, if in uniform, is sometimes refused a drink in those same cosy little pubs. The British Army might be a thing adored, but it was not always an adorable thing. For there was a sort of feeling that to be a Tommy was not to be quite "it," not quite respectable, except when he was wanted, as at Majuba Hill for instance, when he became the national hero: a contradiction not to be explained. Yet Tommy's scarlet coat as we see, splashes the crowd as does the blue and white sailor collar and serge of Jack. For isn't Jack the boy who turned the naval guns into land guns by mounting the big fellows upon carriages and so made the Boer "sit up," and any more than in this year of grace doesn't care his perennial damn? For, as the song then ran: "Jack's the boy for work, and Jack's the boy for play, and Jack's the lad when girls are sad to kiss their tears away." And we all loved Jack.

On the balconies of the clubs as in those of the theatres, clubmen rather splendidly attired in long-tail coats with acres and acres of glossy shirt fronts and collars high enough

to push their heads off, survey the crowd beneath and cheer as they are cheered, for the "swell" of 1900 upon these national occasions could unbend. Indeed, in that day there existed a very real democracy, something that was more than a name.

Beautiful ladies in the tightly corseted waists and voluminous evening dress of the time, watch the crowds surging at their feet and feel that all is indeed right with England. Their long hair (for on this night the glory of woman is still her hair) is piled high upon their shapely heads, lifting from that twist at the back, or done low on the neck in the Greek way that makes a woman look like the goddess she is supposed to be, to give them the air of uncrowned queens.

All may be right with England this night of Mafeking, but all is certainly not right with Ireland, which also is one of the things that do not change. The crowd, otherwise unvindictive, remembers by hoot or cat-call from time to time, that the Irish Party under John Redmond are said to have cheered one of the Boer victories in the House. There has also been an Irish Brigade fighting for the Boers under the most pugnacious little sandy-headed Irishman that ever "put his dooks up," Major John MacBride, one day to be husband of the beautiful Irish rebel, Maud Gonne, to whom I am later to speak in a certain well-known whisky house in the Strand. He drinks soda water, does Major J...n MacBride, but he is a devil to fight. But this same crowd remembers that "Bobs" is an Irishman and that Kitchener was born or brought up "on the ould sod," and so solaces itself.

Every now and then, a hansom or a growler drives up as close as it is permitted to discharge its shouting, grinning freight of 'Varsity men, sometimes in the sharp pull-up over the "apron," into the outskirts of the shouting crowd.

For in all the City of London not a motor is to be found, and no horse traffic is permitted in the main thoroughfares. In the side streets, however, the old penny bus wambles its way with its "regulars" replaced by anything that will stand on four feet. For the regular bus-horses are now war-horses, used to pull British guns across the veldt, and, it is said, have to be started and stopped by a bell!

There is many a fight between cabby and "fare" this Mafeking Night, with acidulated, exacerbated argument. For fares in this dear old London night of long ago is "anyfing you like, guv'nor, and Gawd bless you!" or "damn you!" as the case may be. And of course if you are a real toff, you stand the cabby a drink in one of those pubs where everybody is standing to drink "four ale" and "mother's ruin" to celebrate the event. And the barmaids, bounteously endowed by nature and by art, with their peroxided hair and big blue eyes and bouquets, sweat as they serve.

For London on Mafeking Night is a drouthy place, and the Cockney throat takes quite a lot of lubricating, before it can get into proper order for another bout of cheering.

Squeakers "peep" in the ear. "Buzzers" rush out and then rush back again. "Ticklers" tickle the fair, who tickle back again. "Corncrakes" do their raucous worst as they are swung in Leicester Square, gay with lights, whilst Shakespeare in that little hallowed garden, that even to-day in a world of change is, thank God! still unchanged, looks gravely down upon his successors, doubtless to wonder what old England is coming to!

Blinded Nelson down there in the other square stands his ground aloft, unperturbed, over the masses that froth around and over Landseer's lions, who crouch there, stolid. Union Jacks are waving like a troubled forest, as old Nelson watches. Mouth organs are droning; piano organs are

"Joe" *Alias,* the Almighty Joseph Chamberlain Who Brought the Bud of Imperialism to Flower

crashing ; people are falling into the fountains or overflowing into the Strand and down Northumberland Avenue and Whitehall. From his high perch, he sees the human tides fight and scream their victorious way, as they crawl like ants over the length and breadth of a London which is never again to see such demonstration.

For it is " Mafeking Night," the night that gave a word to the language, a word used by thousands to-day who do not even know whence it came and who themselves can never know the joy of " mafficking."

XIII

NIGHTS RED AND GREEN

A WHITE moon is shining high over the Thames; beneath it, a staring pasteboard moon—Big Ben, the tower of which from the shadows sentinels the long dark curve of the Embankment, with Cleopatra's Needle pointing faintly in the beyond. Out over the sleeping city stares this moon-face of Big Ben as he booms the drowsy hours away, underneath the lantern glowing above, to show that the British Lion is on guard.

Each stroke as it sets the air a-tingle, has in it the brassy clang of doom, to bring back echoes of the " big nights " of long ago.

Nights of the rise and fall of ministries ; " Irish Nights " ; nights of Tariff Reform and of Death Duties ; nights of dishevelled democracy; nights of Wild Women; Boer nights when the British Empire rested upon the razor edge of circumstance—that Mafeking Night out of which we have just come, when the London crowds surged around the old Clock Tower. . . .

The memories of Mafeking are indissolubly linked with the memories of other political nights, before and after, party rather than national—a brood of serpents, head to tail, squirming in venomous circle, with, be sure, plenty of fang and the wish and will to use it . . . and, as sure, plenty of old-fashioned courtesy and that *beau geste* which seems to have vanished from the Lower House in face of

the New Aristocracy and the New Democracy—cash and corduroy.

What ghosts the names of Joseph Chamberlain and Lloyd George and Keir Hardie summon from the London political night, as from other nights, some of them of a period more remote than this record.

Charles Stewart Parnell, as I, a little boy, saw him, addressing the Irish clans, like some pale iceberg lifting from unplumbed depths, an eighth above, seven-eighths below, menace to the ship of empire. Charles Stewart Parnell, later, slender, cold, restrained as, from the Green Benches, he speaks to the enemies, hating and fearing, whom he holds in icy grip, behind him the followers whom he subdues with silence.

His henchman, John Redmond, in the old St. James's Hall, in the nineties, anatomizing his enemies, heartening his friends,and calling to a Home Rule once more showing itself coyly in the political offing, the Home Rule which Kitty O'Shea a few years before seemed to have made politically remote as the Rebellion of '98. And the Irish bagpipes are skirling in Piccadilly for the first and the last time and the Irish yell is heard.

Or it is the John Redmond of the later stage, with Home Rule receding in the distance, as I watched him one night staring out into the London blackness through the swing doors of the House of Commons, like some old caged eagle, dreaming of old time flights on unclipped pinion, still with power—but with filming eye and loosening talon. By his shoulder, the ghost of Parnell, the lost leader thrust out of Paradise with his Eve by the Nonconformist Conscience, then, as real and stealthily menacing as the hell upon which that Conscience had a "cinch" and in which everyone believed.

Or it is a night in "the House," with Arthur James

Balfour, " Prince Arthur " or " Pretty Fanny," as you will, sunk in philosophic fog, his long legs inextricably corkscrewing together, the house from which the picturesqueness of William Ewart Gladstone, with his collar and hatchet and profile of the predatory philanthropist, or of the greater birds of prey, as you chose to regard him, had only just vanished to, let us hope, a far serener clime. Or it is Joseph Chamberlain, monocled, fine-edged as one of his own Birmingham razors, sticking the bowsprit of his nose into the newspapers as into " the faithful Commons," to introduce a wild fowl of foreign origin called Tariff Reform, to an incredulous and static Free Trade world.

Or it is his opponent, John Dillon, with remorseless outline and the glory of that night when he was the first member of Parliament to be " suspended " still hanging over him like a halo, and the air not yet cleared of the echoes of Land Leagues and Plans of Campaign. Or that glorious night when Orange and Green came to blows on the floor of the House and Colonel Saunderson did his deeds of derring-do upon the heated Nationalist, for in those dear dead days, men took their politics, like their whisky, seriously. Or I am looking one evening at Tim Healy, with the astutest brain in the House of Commons, as with bent head and hands behind back he walks up and down peering through his pince-nez, planning God knows what devilment against Irishman and Sassenach alike, in that strong straight hair then not a single streak of grey. Or it is William O'Brien, then untamed, having the horse drawn from his carriage and Irishmen taking its place between the shafts.

Or it is the passing of the Old Guard and the coming of the new, democracy to replace aristocracy, when strange changes seem to impend and the Westminster nights are about to be turned upside down. The British Patriarchate is to pass into the British Matriarchate, with Mrs. Britannia

Meeting at St. James's Hall, May 2, 1890, to Welcome Stanley, the African Explorer, the Prince of Wales in the Chair

usurping the throne upon which John Bull has sat, so long and the cry of Votes for Women ! resounds shrilly if rather piteously.

And now the London night is seething with outraged and outrageous womanhood. We watch the thin white and purple lines of the "W.S.P.U." as they come down Victoria Street from Caxton Hall that night to hurl themselves against the stone barrier of the House, where the high-stomached Male sits entrenched. But first, there are barriers of flesh and blood. For the furies of that pioneer Woman's Battalion of Death have hurled themselves against the London bobbies under the arc-lights of Parliament Square and the voices come faintly squealing like rabbits taken in a snare.

Votes for women !

I can see Christabel Pankhurst, a pert schoolgirl face talking in the London Night into the faces of a howling ribald crowd to whom votes for women are blasphemy : behind them, be sure, in the void, millions too respectable to howl, but who, instead, look down their noses. To that challenge she comes back like a sword stroke. She speaks well—but the feminine voice was never made for the platform, and despite all her eloquence it is the eloquence of a mannequin.

Or I am looking at her mother, in the old Chandos Hall, as she pleads her cause in the packed hotbed of social democracy itself, her auditors as malish and as sceptical as any conservative of them all. A frail, pretty little woman, fearless, her eyes cold and aristocratic, made for love rather than for the platform.

Votes for women !

A suffragette is chaining herself to a pillar in the gallery of the House—Votes for Women ! A maddened woman is bursting her way into the awful decorum, to shock the

Mother of Parliament, Mrs. Grundy herself, out of her seven senses—Votes for Women! A girl is being trampled to death under razor hoofs whilst a Derby crowd looks on —Votes for Women!

How remote and purposeless it all now seems.

And then, the day when these women are to win their cause, only, like so many others, to find it when won, a lost cause.

And so we come to the dawn of democracy, rose-flushed, soon to turn to the bloody crimson of Moscow.

In a leaf that is a strange incursion amongst the others, I have come to a cross-road of memory that for many, holds within it a poignancy which will with difficulty be understood by men and women who never were part of "the movement."

There is no single one of the men and women of that Dawn of Democracy of twenty years ago, a pale pink, rather than a red dawn, but is haunted by the ghosts of that past, now remote as Jack Cade's insurrection, and as meaningless. For in the things of memory, time with remoteness has little to do.

There is no Socialist movement to-day. There are no "Socialists" left. The "Red Nights" of twenty years ago in the Albert Hall and the Queen's Hall could no more be reproduced by the *moutons enragés* of the Labour Party, than a Disraeli or a Grand Old Man could be resurrected by the Tory and Liberal Parties.

Where, to-day, could you see "the most beautiful woman in England," perfectly gowned and crowned, underneath a fierce red flag upon a Queen's Hall platform? Where to-day, could one produce a John Burns, a volcano in eruption, vomiting his burning periods over an audience which, could they then have visualized him as cabinet minister in a Liberal government, would have made cheerful

attempt at lynching him ? Where, to-day, could be seen a Trafalgar Square packed almost to the steps of the National Gallery on a winter's evening with an " assault " led down Whitehall to the attack of the Embassy of a friendly Power, with thirty thousand rag, tag and bobtail, the Red Flag of revolution waving drunkenly over the riot, at their head ?

Gone are these glories, and for ever ! There are no " Socialists," as such, left, for are we not all socialists to-day ?

Letting memory play with its milding light about a period which for so many can only be recalled with the taste that is bitter-sweet, I look back upon the great Socialist Nights through which moved the gods of democracy, some of them pale pink, some of them a virulent red. Some of them, in these days of strange sea-changes, sit entrenched upon the Liberal Olympus, some upon the Tory, if not in fact, in act. Some have forgotten those old brave days of the street corner and the branch meeting already to balance uneasily upon the perches of politics and, wistful, to cast their eyes towards the seats of the mighty, whence siren fingers beckon and around which the waters of Nepenthe lap.

Ah me ! . . .

What a stream of pale ghosts pass across those nights ! Some of them living. Some of them dead. Some of them, perhaps, wishing they were.

Lady Warwick, " The Socialist Countess," in a Paquin " creation " at the Queen's Hall, standing high under the crimson shaded lights, the incarnation of diffident, graceful revolution. Henry Mayers Hyndman, Mahatma of the Social Democratic Federation, afterwards the Social Democratic Party, afterwards the British Socialist Party, and now the Social Democratic Federation, once again in the merry-go-round that are politics, a bearded patriarch of towering

forehead and strangely flattened dome, in bourgeois, tightly buttoned frock coat and black trousers, letting himself go in the gospel according to St. Marx under the ministrations of his fair chairwoman. Behind them, a modern fury of the revolution in a pulsing moment when any day you like the barricades are expected to go up in Trafalgar Square, glooming, be-spectacled, and gripping a monstrous Red Flag.

And to an organ that has become a dirge, the choirs of revolution, grouped uneasily, are singing " The Red Flag " as though it were the Song of the Damned in the pit, and somewhere in the background, one seems to see the red tie flamboyant and great sombrero of Jim Connell, its author, proudly prowling the greys of Fleet Street.

Or the Mahatma of the I.L.P., Keir Hardie, one of the trinity who guide the destinies of the Independent Labour Party, not always, perhaps, so full of brotherly love behind the scenes as they are before them, standing by my side in the East Ham Town Hall to preach the new gospel of love from hate.

" Keir," his grey pelt brushing his collar and his Scots tie-bow picturesquely voluminous, with something Darwinian, something of the " Origin of Species," almost the original Adam, facing with me one night an audience of two thousand Irishmen, in a Belfast Hall, half of them Catholic and Nationalist and half Orange and Protestant —with always the chance that if we slip, we shall be torn to pieces by our enraptured auditors. " Aloof " as always, he is, but none can mistake the desperate sincerity of the Scots Doric and the revolutionary ring of the " rs," and so we escape the jaws of the lions—orange and green.

His brother Scot, and the second person of this trinity, James Ramsay MacDonald, is already firm in the Socialist saddle, and riding the horse with humouring decision, inflexibly guiding it to the appointed goal and the premier-

ship of Empire, even though the Red Bucephalus is beginning to buck.

I can see this cold, pertinacious Scot, on three nights. The first as a fellow speaker to the Civil Servants, in a London hall, persuasive, conciliatory, undespising of the smallest audience or the smallest possible number of potential voters. The second, facing with his own dark courage a howling vanguard of all-reds in the Kingsway Hall to smile grimly as a voice comes from the gallery: "What do you think of that, Ramsay!" as four interesting refugees from South Africa recite the glories of direct action. And the third, in the Albert Hall, preaching to a congregation of the faithful, sawing the air and, unspontaneous, bringing up his periods as though they came from some hidden force pump, "Ramsay," clever politician, dark-eyed, inturned, calculating, with Scot's tenacity and Scot's brain. A figure to win the respect that is intellectual rather than the love that comes, unbidden, from the heart.

The third figure of the Socialist trinity, Philip Snowden, supported by his stick, walks slowly on to the London stage. "The sea-green Incorruptible" stands there, strange fires in the green eyes, tongue like a lash, viperous, stinging, and forefinger going like a flail as it lashes the capitalists for their sins. For Chancellors of the Exchequership are not yet and Banks of England are very far away.

The first Red Night, or rather afternoon, I remember was the one in which, in a minority of one, I at one and the same time made my bow to public life and my challenge to Things as They Are. It was in the great hall of the Cannon Street Hotel in the day when the Labour Party had just been returned twenty-nine strong to the House of Commons, and when, to the excited imagination of Middle Class Defence Leagues, the floodgates of revolution seemed to have opened, with the Red Peril ousting the Yellow,

and the Slaughter of the Innocents just about to begin. And " innocents " we all were !

I was possibly the only secretary and director of public companies in the City of that day who had been bitten by the Red Tarantula (I use the hyperbole of the time), and I can feel again that icy spinal feeling as I rose to move my amendment to the Middle Class Defence resolution with all the City Fathers ranged solemnly on the platform, round-eyed, incredulous, of the viper they had nourished. I awoke the next morning to find myself " famous," or infamous, as you will, in the morning papers, as a sort of pioneer of middle-class democracy in the heart of the stronghold of autocracy. It was a sign of the times.

It is a London afternoon in Trafalgar Square, and the plinth of revolution with the blinded Nelson above staring out over the undreamed and undreamable is covered with figures. Out of the ruck stands one long lean figure, perching precariously upon the sloping plinth—Jim Larkin, stormy petrel of revolt. Like some wild bird he stands there as though about to leap off into space to stretch his eagle wings, the steel-grey eyes searching above St. Martin's Church. And then he has erupted, a human spitfire with the fanged words running like snakes lambent through the crowd. Before him, the crowd stretches back beyond the fountains, back to the wall beyond, the Communist wall, against which revolution is one day to put " paid " to the capitalist's account and in red ink.

Beyond again, on the railings before the National Gallery, the outposts of revolution gather like vultures waiting for their prey. Hook-nosed, dark-eyed, men and women, their hungry eyes weary with hope deferred, but unquenched.

Or it is Sorgue, " *la belle Sorgue,*" angel of revolution, the great sweep of hat caught up on one side in crimson, her high swelling bust dominating the close hips and long

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Some Old Favorites of Thirty Years Ago

Improvements in the House of Commons. Why not keep on the premises portable replicas of all members, carefully modeled in wax, which can occupy their places during any temporary absence. When in situ the difference is scarcely perceptible.

limbs, is trying to explain to an Anglo-Saxondom that will never understand, the Latin soul.

There is a turn of the switch. The place is the same, but now on this grey October afternoon there is gathered the fearful *camaraderie* of that day, incongruous, inconsequent. James O'Grady, yet to take over Colonial governorships under a Labour Party, modulate, respectable, is chairman and is moving a resolution with a word in it that runs red-headed through the crowd—the word "murder." Above his head flutters a black banner with Death's Head and Crossbones. Behind it, again, another with the device ominous in the grey of the Square: "To hell with the murderer Alfonso!" For the occasion is the protest at the shooting of an unknown derelict of revolution, Francisco Ferrer, in the Montjuich trenches, and Labour being international, indeed, claims a right of interference that has no boundaries in this world, for at those of the world to come, it stops.

Behind him are ranged the "comrades." R. B. Cunninghame Graham, the handsomest Socialist of them all, the Charles Stuart face with its finely pointed beard and delicate sensitive nostril and mouth as though it had stepped off the horse near him, upon which his prototype is mounted, looks down Whitehall to the place where the Stuart lost his head and his crown. The leader of orthodox Social Democracy, H. M. Hyndman, is near him in frock and silk hat, a nonconformist amongst nonconformists, indeed, but knowing as little of them as they of him. With him, again, are comrades, Social Democrats, who one day, in the day of battle, still distant half a dozen years, are, under the warp of war, to breathe defiance from a hundred platforms against these very comrades. But all this is still in the to be.

Before them all, the figure of a boy is moving, crouching

with hands clawing and outstretched as the vast, humorous mouth opens and closes to discharge its megaphonic message. Victor Grayson, of Colne Valley, and the speech of " broken bottles," freckled, boyish " Victor," darling of the young Reds and *enfant terrible* of the Socialist movement, whose great voice is so soon to still.

And I am standing there, wondering what I or the meeting would be at, and am calling upon that *olla podrida* of revolution to follow me down Whitehall to a demonstration or assault upon the Spanish Embassy, I don't know which. So, down we go. The crowd shouting drunkenly, the banners waving drunkenly, and Graham, Grayson and my poor self, God help us ! drunk too—drunk on democracy.

And now the tempo is changing and from fierce revolt we pass into the *andante* of the gentle, but not all of them, thank God ! Fabians. George Bernard Shaw, one night ot long ago, in his famous contortionist act, " doing his stuff " amid a blaze of pyrotechnics like an enlarged Brock's firework, carrying his lightnings in either hand, and looking like the devil. Wells, like a well-washed cherub, with the famous sociological-novelist vainly trying to elude the genially unscrupulous rapier of the elusive Irishman, for Wells always found the pen mightier than the tongue—and easier to use.

Then another night, at the Queen's Hall, a night of a time when the suffragettes were making London horrific with their howlings, a night of Suffrage and suffering, the Queen's Hall audience ranged solemnly tier on tier as judges. And I am going for Shaw and for the universe, not a bit afraid of my redoubtable antagonist and eager to win my spurs, what time he regards me with friendly-sardonic eye from his seat on the platform.

A night with Shaw speaking in that slender contained

way, viewing his audience with something of the same astonishment that they viewed him.

I can see him now as he rose to speak, a formidable object. He stood to his full height, feet slightly apart, the arms crossed over the most vital figure in London town.

The tall Irishman standing there, his brows knitted, perhaps puzzled at one of these queer cachinnations which sometimes ran across his audiences in those days, comes back to me after all these years.

I once acted as his chairman at the tiny Chandos Hall in Maiden Lane, then headquarters of the old Social Democratic Federation, afterwards to pass from its high destiny to rehearsals for musical comedy. I recall the siege laid to me by mobs of reporters who begged me for God's sake to get them " just five minutes " with the cosmic analyst, whose words as " copy " were worth golden guineas. And I recall the rough and tumble in that little cockpit packed with young, pugnacious, though not too confident antagonists!

Shaw always appeared on these occasions as if he had that very instant come up through a trap-door like Mephistopheles and you expected fire to rush from his lips. Nor were you disappointed.

One other night.

It was in the Brotherhood Church in the New Southgate Road, at the time when the Second Russian Duma was fleeting across Europe from the Czar. One of the speakers, then an ill-considered person, was a dark tragic figure—a man with burning eyes and the skull of a Mongol, which he was, for Nicolai Lenin, as he was to be known and often called Jew, had not a drop of Jewish blood in him.

Doctrinaire, as helplessly dogmatic as any priest of any Church has ever been, none could mistake the intense earnestness of this revolutionary who was one day to set the world by the ears. Dreaming even then a dream wilder

and more improbable of realization than any dream ever dreamed of man, the dark Russian passed through the spume and froth of that conference with no more note of his passage taken than he had been tramp steamer passing in the ocean. But it was this ill-considered figure which one day was to overthrow in a breath the world's mightiest empire and to set the seeds of a Red Harvest which may one day be reaped in blood and tears.

And with him was Maxim Gorki, Russian novelist and socialist—also a Mongol. Upon his head he wore an astrakhan cap from under which his slitted eyes looked out.

That night in the Brotherhood Church made history, not only for Russia but for the world.

What figures move past through these nights of revolution. Sidney Webb, spectacled and quietly seething with figures in his London rooms. His beautiful wife, with something Sibyllic about her calm deep eyes. Tom Mann, fiery prophet of direct action coming out of the Antipodes to launch a prehistoric communism one night at the Scala upon a sceptic and at that day, sterilized world. His old comrade, Ben Tillett, the circus rider with the profile of a Greek god and, as some once thought, the soul of a Greek hero. Herbert Burrows, theosophist, and Robert Blatchford, determinist—Burrows with calm English face and eyes deep-set under bushy brows, Blatchford with heavy piratical moustache, dark Italian eyes, and gipsy-swarth complexion. And into all this spume of revolution drifts, one London summer night, Anatole France, benevolent satyr, praying me, ironic, that he may be permitted to find the platform upon which he is to be the speaker.

Celt and Teuton, Latin and Indian, Slav and Anglo-Saxon, dreamers of dreams, they pass, palely, through the London nights of long ago.

XIV

KING EDWARD'S FUNERAL

THERE are two London Nights that will always stand out from the other milestones of memory, sign-posts to mark the passage of history—one, the night the news of the loss on her maiden voyage of the world's largest ship, the *Titanic*, was flashed into Fleet Street ; the other, the night of the lying-in-state of King Edward and the vigil of that short May night before he rode on his gun carriage from Westminster Hall to Windsor, with his Field-Marshal's boots reversed in the stirrups of the royal charger as it followed the gun carriage.

This night and the day that followed drew its significance not from the funeral of a king. For, as we know, kings die. Mortals die. Therefore kings are mortals. So runs the syllogism. But it was for London a meeting-place, a Grand Parade of the Great Ones of the earth, some of them to-day low enough, some of them kings without thrones, some of them dead. That day it was not the body of a king but history that was passing before us.

Nearly a decade before, there had been a similar night of vigil when Queen Victoria had been sent upon the road which all mortals must travel. Then, as at the passing of her son, knots of people had held watch in the London night, gathering here and there about the coffee stalls or at the corners of the streets with that curiosity of the people in the pageantry of death.

One and a half miles of the people of that day, as remote

and unfamiliar as though they had stepped out of the eighteenth century, and it a short twenty years ago—and the wheels of time turn backwards. One hundred and fifty thousand men and women, who have borne the burden and heat of the day, a black serpent crawling on its belly from six in the morning until nearly midnight. For all of them, in some place or other, have decked themselves in black; the women in their large brimmed hats, three-quarter length coats, tightly boned figures and long dresses, standing like crows in the queue; the men in small tight bowlers and straight up and down tubular trousers. But the pillars of the law, in their helmets and skirted tunics, as always, unchanged.

The night draws on to morning and the eyes of the watchers of the night are red-rimmed and heavy as they take up their position in Parliament Square and Whitehall or at Hyde Park Corner and the Marble Arch.

Not long after the dawn has broken, law and order has already set its heavy hand upon the traffic of London town and there is a great stillness. Twelve men of the Guards and Household Cavalry take the body of King Edward out of the Hall where it has held levee, to place it upon a gun carriage, with "the Crown and Cushion, the Regalia, and the Insignia of the Garter laid thereon."

In that aristocracy of death, there passes that great procession of men living and dead, the symbols of England's greatness, men whose names were then on every lip, though to-day but lingering memories. And as they pass, the sullen boom of the minute guns comes to the ears of those who look on.

In that historical procession, there come first two figures, saviours of empire. Kitchener, hero of Omdurman and fighter of dervishes, first of the Arabian Knights, of whom such incredible tales of adventures in the Sahara were told, and

A Solemn Moment in Equestrian Annals, The London Horse Show: The Prince of Wales Presenting Cup to Mr. Moore for His Hackney Horse, Rufus

Roberts, who had written British history not in Africa but in India, the little V.C. beloved. Square-browed Kitchener, scarlet-clad, that morning sat his horse like some centaur-colossus, the eyes of the blue of swords, gleaming through their spectacles out of the grim, smiling redness of the face with its heavy moustache, and no vision of a green-grey sea and sudden lurking mine-stroke to cloud. The little Earl, wholesome as a Devon apple, veteran of a hundred fights, his marshal's bâton resting on his thigh, greeted as "Bobs" with a low murmur of affection. With them, another V.C., Evelyn Wood, Field-Marshal.

In the band of braves that followed, there were names then almost unknown, but later to be written into the mosaic of empire. A man, schoolboyish and with a snub nose, a Rear-Admiral of the name of Jellicoe, who is one day to fight a great battle and to sow the seeds of a controversy which in the years is to bring up tares. Near him a plain "Mr. McKenna." And then behind him, the most queerly interesting face in that procession of the great and near-great, as strange in the Mall as a fairy—a man with expansive mouth, clever rather prominent eyes, a young-old man of the name of Fisher: "Jacky," hobgoblin and demon.

Then the gun carriage with all the panoply of death resting upon it; behind it, the royal charger with the empty saddle; behind it again the son, King George, looking as always, a serious, decent-minded, rather lonely, little man. On his left hand, the most notable figure in all that pageantry, the man whose name is one day to be the most execrated on earth, H.I.M. the German Emperor, then to every man and woman there, the incarnation of power.

Nobody has at that distant day suggested that Germany and England, their royal blood related, should ever be

other than friendly cousins—first cousins, but be sure that that grim line of grey monsters snouting sullen at the Nore as the German Emperor passes his way, are not there only for a funeral. They are there for a purpose, just as are the Royal Marines, the Foot Guards, and the Cavalry on the morrow as they defile in all the pomp and pride of the British Army, as the Emperor watches. They may be there for lamentation: they are also there for demonstration. And Wilhelm knows it.

But 1914 is still four years away and a World War as remote as Mars.

His Imperial Majesty came across the North Sea, which, be sure, he calls the German Ocean, into Sheerness last evening. He came in the royal yacht "Hohenzollern," flying the imperial standard with the double eagle upon it, its wings still unclipped, imperially escorted by two German warships and by the four British destroyers which have met him at the Shivering Sand buoy. The "Hohenzollern" has, at his own request, passed the length of the ships of the British Navy at the Nore in sullen silence and unsaluted, and his imperial body has slept on board.

I had seen Wilhelm that January morning of nine years before, as he followed the gun carriage upon which his grandmother lay. A man with a common face—the face of a barber, with upturned moustaches, a man of common face save for the eyes—the eyes of blue steel that were unforgettable. He rode that day clad in his grey cloak and high boots, with the four-inch band of crepe, with a gleam in his eye as he looked upon the greatest city in the world —a city I do not doubt he hated, as its people—and he looked upon it as a man will look upon a city which he will one day sack

Again this day of King Edward's funeral, I saw him—with the old unconquerable gleam, so soon to merge into

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The German Emperor as England Saw Him

Herr Wilhelm (*the Quick-Change Artist*). "What have we here! Hum! This Russian Stripling seems to have had some big receptions. But wait till *I* go on tour! Aha!"

the easy-lived bearded senility of Doorn, the band of crepe about his arm and his withered hand resting before him as something that did not belong to him. He looked the only kingly personage—the only king among them all, despite his barber face, the rather small back to the head and the rather feminine chin. And the other kings who came behind, as kinglets.

The Londoners looked at the Emperor and the Emperor looked back at the Londoners, encompassing them as little as they him. He looked at them like a master—but they did not look back at him as slaves—but with that queer elusive detachment of the Cockney, who is the essential Englishman. And all the King's horses and all the King's men could not have made one of that rather under-nourished poor-dressed crowd bend the knee to the Emperor of all the Germanies. Perhaps it was upon that stubbornness in the Great War, that day unthinkable and outside all conception, the German metal broke. I do not know.

All the kings of the earth seemed to be gathered together in London on that day.

The Vikings—Kings of Norway and of Denmark. The Latins—the King of the Belgians, the King of Portugal, then still with his crown, and the King of Spain, a fledgling with the Hapsburg jaw and the look of the boy just out of school. And other kings to-day without crowns: King Ferdinand of Bulgaria rode there with his foxy face. And the King of Greece, riding between the Kings of Norway and of Spain. Austria, still a kingdom, had sent the Arch-Duke Francis Ferdinand to sponsor her, and the Czar of all the Russias, one day to be done to death in a cellar, still sat enthroned, a tiny figure lost in a white waste, and he had sent the Grand Duke Michael, a name known then to the half of Europe.

And not in that procession, but waiting at Windsor, a

youngish-looking man of the name of Teddy Roosevelt, to represent the biggest white country on earth, then still regarded as the patchwork home of pork-packers and Red Indians, the sun of which had not yet risen to obscure the glory that was Lombard Street.

And the women. Queen Alexandra, the royal mourner *par excellence*, in a closed carriage. Behind her, Queen Mary, and the princesses, some of them with those then strangely familiar German names—Princess Henry of Battenburg and the Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein.

They passed before us in this pageantry of death—these kings soon to be crownless, a shadow-show passing out of the darkness into the light and then into the shadow of the tomb again. But in that shadow-show is written the whole story of the world that is gone, and with it the history of the great days of the British Empire.

And only twenty years ago!

XV

A NIGHT OF STRONG MEN

LOOMING through the mists of long ago, one sees rosy giants at play with globular dumb-bells or chain-snapping over giant distended biceps. One sees man-laden grand pianos being lifted as though of no account, and there was not one of us who did not know that advertisement of A Stout, showing a princely young person, presumably nurtured upon it, with a slight upturned waxed moustache, very lightly attired and with a ribbon around the neck with an order hanging from it, as with one arm he gracefully lifts above his head a full grown and kicking stallion.

There is also a night at the Tivoli with a young man of the name of Launceston Elliott, amateur weight-lifting champion, as he comes on like some bounding babe of Babylon, a rosy Cupid escaping from some supernal region, to lift avoirdupois upon his strong right arm and all marked in plain figures.

As for our press, it is almost shamelessly nude with chest-expanders and spring-grip dumb-bells, stretched by naked vaunting youth.

Or we are back again in a little room not far from Percy Street, to see two strong men, yclept Ince and Aston, lift for the heavyweight championship, with straining muscle and eyeball, casting the iron bars from them into the wooden platform to shake the Tottenham Court Road, and with it our hearts and our admiration.

With what reverence do we not regard Arthur Saxon,

doyen of strong men and world champion, and with what critical gravity do we not look upon the referee, attired to his last button and with highly waxed moustache " fixed " with Pomade Hongroise, *the* pomade of that day, as he calls his fateful : " One—two ! " which signifies that another record has gone bust. With what detached intensity do we, the patrons of specific gravity, view from our chairs in that tiny room the bulging muscle and straining of nerve.

Or it may be that we are back in the old Hippodrome, when circus was still circus, to see hailed before our eyes the god of our boyhood's days, Eugene Sandow, immortalized in plaster in the South Kensington Museum as, in one sense at least, the greatest living European, with his 62-inch chest, with its fourteen inches expansion, sylph-like waist of 30 inches, and 19½ inch biceps, as all glistening white velvet, as the trained man should be, he bends backwards over the tail of his white horse, little less famous than Napoleon's charger, despite its scraggy tail, to lift from the floor of the ring, two hundred pounds of flesh and blood and to place it on the seat before him ! (I use the impersonal " it," for these living weights were just weights and nothing more.)

Or, a little later in the evening, the same glorious Sandow, now a metamorphosed Sandow, " Private Sandow," if you please, on the bill, scarce to be recognized in the new khaki of the Boer War, who, upon such a trifling difficulty as the need of bridge building within a minute to save horse, foot and artillery from the menacing Boer, offers his own body for the task. Oh ! the thrill when doing " the bridge " on all fours backwards, if you get me, the bridge is placed in position across his young sacrificial body and the British Army move across him to " The British Grenadiers " and " Rule Britannia."

Or we are back in Hengler's Circus, up there where the

Palladium now stands. We are in the middle of the GREAT WRESTLING TOURNAMENT for quite unbelievable prizes by quite unbelievable men. " The March of the Gladiators " is struck up, the entrance curtains are flung back, and there is the Grand Parade, with which muscle minus brain opened each evening.

And what a strain of heroes as they file around the ring like circus horses. There is Anderson, a loping sloping-shouldered dangerous-looking young man, who looks as if he ought to be in hospital, but who happens to be middle-weight champion of the world, and after him again every form of grappler and grappling known to inhumanity. There is the great Poddubny, Russian Cossack and man-eater, with the fiercest moustachios, the whitest skin and the most engaging smile of them all, behind him a certain Frenchman with the romantic name of Laurent le Beaucarois, with unromantic calves, whose claim to fame is that he once defeated the unconquerable Hackenschmidt. There is a formidable young Scot, with the biggest shoulder-spread of them all, who would make a splendid wrestler but that he is homesick, is " off his feed," and, as they say, cries every day for Bonnie Scotland and his ma.

For these men are big babies, and when they are throwing one another about in the arena, and especially when Poddubny, a regular Russian bear, sits scratching his head in the sawdust and grinning at the anger of his French opponent, whom he has been pinching in defiance of all rules of wrestling, Hengler's looks like a crèche for infants.

Or it is one of those " Great Wrestling Matches " for world championships, as for prizes and side-stakes existing sometimes only in the florid fancy of the promoters. And Stanislaus Zbyszko, the Galician " Professor," is playing with an unfortunate young man who has materialized from nowhere at the London Pavilion—Zbyszko with his nine-

teen-inch biceps and such a waist as few can encircle. Or it is Poddubny again, this time at the old Oxford, standing like a colossus over a downtrodden Turk, who has been announced as one of "The Terrible Turks" who were accustomed to appear and to disappear at regular intervals, wondering what he will do with him as he laughs above a midget who only weighs fourteen stone.

That Poddubny victor in two thousand matches, whom I was to see twenty years later wrestle Stecher in New York for the World's Championship, this time the real thing, his old shoulders for the first time in his half-century of life to feel the mat after one hour and thirty-eight minutes of strenuous wrestling.

They pass before us those strong men and wrestlers of the years that are gone—black and white, come out of the shadows but to pass back again.

Then Mr. Benjamin's Indian wrestlers—dark-skinned Afrits filled with magic, black magic, whom no White could hope to hold, pass across our stage like shades, quickly to disappear. For none could be found to face brown magicians who had so studied muscle and nerve that White screamed in their locks and quitted. There was a man called Armand Cherpillod once. . . .

But how they all pale their ineffectual fires before that April night of 1906, at Olympia, when Georges Hackenschmidt, "the Russian Lion," met Ahmed Madrali, "the Terrible Turk," for the catch-as-catch-can heavyweight wrestling championship of the world! How paltry even the greatest of them before the man of the magic stuff of youth, mystery still caught in the blue of his eye, who, that night in the Alhambra, had come out of the Russian twilight to throw down the gauntlet to Carkeek, the Master, and to go in that astonishing meteoric sweep through the wrestling firmament of old masters and young, from Paul Pons to

Old Tom Cannon, the boy with ten world weight-lifting championships behind him, to send the greatest of the luminaries crashing out of the sky. That there were giants in those days may be gathered from the measurements of these colossi as they appeared upon the programme of that Olympian night :

	Georges Hackenschmidt "The Russian Lion"	Ahmed Madrali "The Terrible Turk"
Age ..	28 years	29 years
Height ..	5 feet 8 inches	6 feet 0½ inch
Chest ..	52 inches	45 inches (normal)
Weight ..	15 stone 2 lbs.	16 stone
Thigh ..	26 inches	27 inches
Calf ..	17¼ „	17¾ „
Forearm ..	15½ „	14½ „
Neck ..	22 „	18 „
Biceps ..	18¾ „	18¼ „

We are back in the great hollow building and Lieut. Forrest's "Celebrated Light Infantry Military Band" has regaled us with old favourites from "The Entry of the Gladiators," a sort of International Anthem for such meetings, to Wagner's Act 3 of Lohengrin, also an international evergreen, and Myddleton's negroid, haunting "Down South."

The arc lights suddenly flare in icy brilliance ; the M.C. has called for silence, reluctantly given, by appealing to the gentlemanly instincts of the audience, the appeal irresistible, and Madrali, an ivory image, with shaven head, finely nurtured moustache and good-natured eyes has come in under the ropes to the roar of the best sports on earth. For Ahmed is popular.

Then the darling of the gods, Georges Hackenschmidt. But Georges must get a paragraph to himself.

Which of us looking back upon that day of the strong man, can forget the unforgettable, Georges Hackenschmidt

to wit, with his skin gleaming like fine white silk, his frame of a bull-panther, the only heavyweight of them all to wrestle at the pace of a lightweight, and with a first five minutes "moral" attack that none ever resisted.

"Hack" of the pale spiritual face and with chain lightning locked in that superb body, with its small deltoids and giant biceps and with the stomach hollowed out as though a woodman had been at work there under the great sternum. "Hack," with the short boyish nose and the tipped faun-like ears set close to the head, and "Hack," with the baby socks and canvas shoes in which he always wrestled, gear that made him look like a naughty sand boy. "Hack" with his "flying mare" and his sudden quick leaps and turns. "Hack" with the hidden springs, which uncoiled themselves one after the other as though they had been "sprung," to set him a-leap as of his own volition.

Madrali, reptilian and slow, his antithesis, with a body of ivory and rubber, the long muscles running like snakes under the dark skin. The body round and pliable, turning upon the pivot of its 35-inch waist, and the dorsal muscles coming up and lying down like living things as they twist themselves under the electric lights.

But memory is running back and here are the men once more fiddling with each other inside the white ropes and shuffling over the grey canvas whilst the thousands hold their breath.

They are thinking of that first contest in the Graeco-Roman style, when the Russian in that electrifying first minute had rushed the Turk, gripped him about the middle despite the big man's frantic thrusting of fingers up nostril to make him loose his hold, and thrown him so terribly that his forearm was broken and he could not go on. Ah, but this is "catch-as-catch-can" and Madrali is a world

master at the go-as-you-please game, in which almost everything save the awful strangle-hold, is allowed.

Slowly they circle each other, Hackenschmidt's glory still undimmed by defeat, his star still unquenched by that dreadful day, yet to come, when Gotch is to maul him into insensibility and to make him quit, only himself to cry "best" to a grappler that never loosens hold and never loses—cancer. Here is the unbeatable one, his muscles inheld as coiled spring moving about his man, as an enemy will move about an ivory tower. And there is the Turk, his amulet concealed, praying to Allah and the Terrible Ones of the Mohammedan faith.

Then the spring has uncoiled itself and amidst the thunder of the thousands. The Turk is on face and hands on the mat with Hackenschmidt above, the arm is forced behind and up the back and then, despite the bridge, for Madrali, a Bridge of Sighs, the great shoulders are forced to the canvas, and what had seemed eternity had been shortened by but one minute and thirty-four seconds of the time-keeper's watch.

And the thousands have broken loose, and calls are coming from brassy throats, and the whole world seems to have crawled into that ringed building and the crowd are paying tribute—the tribute they never pay to brain, only to brawn—yet to brawn with brain behind it.

But Ahmed, whose gods have failed him, goes back to his corner to sit there during the interval, whilst two great tears steal slowly out of the brown eyes. Defeat is always bitter. But there is still a chance—the chance of Allah, and Allah is great. *Kismet.* The championship turned not on one fall, but on two out of three. And who knows? *Kismet.*

The Russian comes back into the ring, the shoulders showing themselves powerfully under the folds of his

dressing-gown. There is the gleam of victory in his eye—the gleam that he believes can never be quenched by mortal man.

The men face each other again, but this time the Turk is wary as a weasel. He will *not* be caught. Again and yet again he throws his bulk forward to clutch at his opponent's ankle—but always Hackenschmidt is just that fraction too soon, the fraction upon which wrestling matches, as love-matches, turn. The big rubbery man is after him and again he has dived, this time for the grapple to catch. For the impossible has happened and the Russian is crouching on all fours on the canvas like a huge white tortoise, the head coming out from time to time to watch what his adversary would be at. He is on his face, but he is not on his back, and it is the back that matters.

And now the great Turk is behind. Slowly and with a certain fatalism he brings his famous right arm under the belly of the Lion, that right arm which has never failed him to bring insensibility to his opponent and to him victory. To the wrist he has clamped his left arm, like a tentacle of steel, and now he is squeezing the breath and the vitality out of the Russian. You can almost see it exuding from his pores. He is to squeeze him into insensibility and acquiescence as he has done hundreds of others and in his sharp brown eyes there is the certainty of victory. Has he not always done it before?

But this is no ordinary man. If he has his dark-skinned gods, the Russian has his White Gods, and in these moments men seem possessed of devils—white and other.

Again and yet again he clamps that vice of rubber and muscle about his man, and again and yet again the great bulk heaves under him to loosen it. The great white smooth chest inflates itself for the intake of that air that is life. The Turk is puzzled. For a moment he stares down at that

white back he is bestriding to wonder what this thing can be that can neither be crushed nor cowed.

The ghost of indecision comes stealing into his face and the colossus underneath, a ganglion of nerve, feels though it cannot see, with that telepathy of the fighting animal. And in a flash it has happened.

There is a sudden wriggle, an arm-roll, and before the audience can draw three breaths there is the Terrible Turk, terrible no longer, with his shoulders to the mat.

But Hackenschmidt, Hackenschmidt is on the throne of the world.

What are kings to this prince of athletes? What are the triumphs of brain to the throes of two strong men locked together and that final victorious grip from which there is no escape? What are—well what is anything?

Hackenschmidt is that night king of the earth. For this one night, fate, dark, brooding fate, already trailing him, gives him joy, as it gives his adversary the bitterness that is death.

Georges Hackenschmidt—Lord of Life.

XVI

A NIGHT WITH THE "GODS" AT OLYMPIA

'On my right—gentlemen—Kid Cocks, the Bermondsey Bantam. On my left—Abe Cohen, the Limehouse Chicken!"

And the footlights are up once more in the old Canterbury; the eighteen-foot ring is haunting the middle of the grey stage; and the Master of the Ceremonies, arrayed like an undertaker in frock coat two sizes too big, decent white shirt-front in a waistcoat cut almost down to his waist line, diminutive black bow and turn-down collar, faces the ironies of a howling auditorium.

"And may the best man win!"

Result: pandemonium; objurgations; cat-calls; kind enquiries as to the referee's mother-in-law, what time the two lightly-clad gents, somewhere around nine stone, one of whom has just crawled under the ropes whilst the other has jumped over them with a devil-may-care affectation that was a delight to the "gods," try and look as pleasant as nature will permit.

Oh! the smell of the old Canterbury—that delightful odour of stale four-ale and Taddy's Myrtle Grove and shag, with a linger of gas through the tang. Oh! for the "ghosty" atmosphere of that unheated home of revelry on the winter's afternoon of a boxing "*matinée*" and for the sporting gentleman in the toppety-top gallery with their "conks" resting negligently upon the edge, releasing disparaging, not to say caustic, remarks into the ring below. Oh! for the smack

of the gloves and, to a gentleman who already doesn't know whether it is to-day or to-morrow, the ref's admonitory : " Keep your 'ands up, for Gawd's sake, Bill ! " or the raucous : " Break—break !"

And the pleading-expostulatory : " *Will* you blighters break or won't you—you couple of cuddling softies—wot do you think you are—sitting on a bench in 'Ide Park ? "

For the noble art of the four-ounce glove had burst over the London of twenty years ago like a waterspout. Everybody was hitting everybody else, including the Irish M.P.s, just at the other end of the Westminster Bridge. The four dark luminaries of the ring—Jack Johnson, Sam Langford, Sam McVea, and handsome Joe Jeanette were the Ju-Jus of young London, and a pale little French boy across the Channel, named Carpentier, was just essaying his fledgling efforts under the guidance of a white troll, who, if the wild fancy take him, answers to the name of Descamps.

Sometimes we held our *matinées* at the Canterbury music-hall, sometimes in another of the South London halls, sometimes farther afield. Wily managers of portentous noses and potential bank balances dominated the poor devils of fighters at sometimes a shilling a round, and I have known a little man I could almost carry on the palm of my hand knocked out at two separate contests on the same afternoon for a total reward of half a sovereign, to the delight of the Great Unwashed. . . .

" On my right . . . "

The gent in the nondescript smalls and a pair of ordinary boots with the heels off to look like the genuine thing, has not had a real meal since last Monday week. But he has a fighting, sheering nose ; a mouth like a gash in his " dial " ; and a pair of beautifully cultivated cauliflower ears that seemingly, and taken all in all, are the delight of the fair sex, of whom we have a sprinkling on this winter afternoon. He is of the stem of Jesse, whilst his opponent, a little Cockney, with a snub

nose, a pair of twinkling eyes and freckled face, is obviously pure Gentile. Perhaps not so terribly pure—for he appears to have a ferocious female following in the " gods."

As for us, butchery, licensed-victualling, mottle-faced Pooh Bahs—we sit like the toffs we are, in the stalls at the ridiculous figure of two bob and a " kick " a time.

The Jewish gentleman means to earn that one pound five, for to the victor the spoils. His beak looms victoriously over the reek of the Myrtle Grove and the black shag, his gloves, black and hard with old spilt blood, going like steam and doing damage, for he has been pushing back the padding from the knuckles ever since he slunk under the ropes. He bears no ill-will to Freckles—he only means to kill him, for he is hungry.

" Go on, Abe ! Let him 'ave it, Kid ! Dahn in the bread-basket. Oooh ! what a beauty ! "

The mottle-faced gentlemen, fully licensed and sporting the big Havanas and the young gold cables to which are attached double-jewelled, treble-reinforced hunters, look on with entire nonchalance as the Jew systematically avenges the wrongs of his race. Their butcherly indifference is magnificent : " W'y, if I couldn't do better'n that I'd eat my old mare." " Couldn't 'it a dint in a pahnd of butter ! " " Gawd ! tike it awye ! " the comment terse.

When the final round at four bob the round approaches, the Jewish gentleman, who looks as if he had been at Waterloo, is a gory mask. The crowd, however, obviously not by any means all of the Chosen People, call him a rosy wreck. For occult reasons, known to themselves, they also call him a sanguinary liar. But his victorious, if encrimsoned conk still sheers its way through a storm of upper-cuts, left hooks, and half-arm jolts, helped by a remarkable pair of elbows in the tighter places. And when, as the gong goes for the finish, in the fullness of his heart and with a forgiveness of

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"The Coffee Cooler"

insult that any Christian of them all might envy and with the certainty that he has won that one pound five, he throws both arms about his opponent's neck to imprint a crimson kiss upon his cheek, the crowd roars its delight.

Them were the times!

Now, where could you see for the price of a modern whisky and soda, a gentleman of the excellence of Frank Craig, "The Coffee Cooler" to wit, perform that sleight of hand which at once deceives the eye and leads to dreamland? Where, to-day, could you see an old coloured veteran like "The Cooler," grizzled and scarred from twenty years of ring battles, as he came out from his retirement that Canterbury afternoon to face the Heavyweight Champion of the British Navy, as a lean hound will face a hippopotamus, to measure him with the left as though he were tickling his chin, and then, swoosh! to bring over the right to fell the colossus, not for ten but for two hundred and ten seconds! Where, oh where!

Oh! gentle art.

Where, to-day, could you see for the price of a couple of shaves a gentleman lose his pants in the fifth round of an umpteen-round contest, what time the pit and gallery become one ribaldry of mirth? Where now could you see a gorgeous promoter with giant Corona on, in shirt sleeves and a straw diamond as big as a pea, have a rough and tumble with one of his own hireling boxers over a trifle of one-and-six?"

Oh! gentle, gentle art.

Where, oh! where, can you see to-day . . . But that reminds me.

It was in the Red Lion, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, that nearly twenty years ago a few of us met together one night in an upper chamber to found the Boxers' Trade Union, in a day before Trades Unionism had become a beggar on horseback.

Look upon those noble countenances. Look upon young Ted Broadribb, popularly known as "Young Snowball," the first man to defeat fragile Georges Carpentier. If it comes to that—look at me, the Chairman!

Look upon that collection of the flower, the cauliflowered of the noble art, as they bend their dinted heads together literally to make head against the enemy—the Jew promoter. Observe men whose names are household words and household gods as they become contemplative over Rule 21: "That the subscription shall be threepence per week," proposed by Young Snowball, seconded by Mr. Jimmy Hicks, and that no man shall allow himself to be knocked about for less than five shillings per round, per night—" perhaps," the last murmured by a cynic who had suffered.

And Mr. Eugene Tunney asks £200,000 for a fight and Mr. John Dempsey has his oil wells and his coal mines and his auto de luxe and the many other little things that are the appurtenances of the noble art of to-day.

The Canterbury Nights stood for the poor pilgrims of the glove game, Canterbury Pilgrims, treading in their earthly pilgrimage a road where punches were many and pounds were few.

But there was another—the gilt-edged side, at which saturnine black gentlemen with ferociously smiling countenances assaulted other gentlemen, white gentlemen, at boxing *soirées*, for I think that is what Mr. Hugh McIntosh first termed them.

Mr. Hugh D. McIntosh was the Australian millionaire promoter (at least that was how he seemed to us in a still un-Americanized England) who used to send out his gilt-edged invitations upon embossed and crested cards for those indescribable evening " at-homes " at Olympia and elsewhere, at which Jimmy Britt (I beg his pardon—Mr. James E. Britt) ex-lightweight champion of the Land of Hope and

Glory, used to officiate in regulation claw hammer, varnished shoes, white *picquet* waistcoat, white kid gloves and slightly bandy legs—a sight for the gods in the upper regions.

Nights when the one and only Bombardier Wells, darling of the " gods " but not of fortune, for twenty long rounds kept the Yankee " Porky " Flynn's glove out of his glass jaw and pasteboard stomach by his prodding left. Nights when six and a half feet of Swede, Fred Fulton, " the Swedish Plasterer " to wit, with a single jolt destroyed in an English White Hope all hope as all likeness to humanity.

These were no vulgar " fights," but high sacrifices, with a ritual sacred and immutable in their temple, Olympia.

The great circle of the building, now fallen from its high estate, the estate of " the noble art," to become the home of exhibitions, with every approach crowded with gentlemen, all wearing the badge of their tribe (I refer to the ear rather than to the nose) : actors and *littérateurs* ; priests, professors, painters and politicians (I have seen cabinet ministers there) ; clubmen clothed to a monocle and magnolia, sometimes with their womanhood—all trying to get in to see a natty little black gentleman, standing five feet six inches, destroy the image of God in a white gentleman standing six feet and half an inch. Oh ! Origin of Species ! *O tempora, o mores !*

The sweep of the auditorium, with the pink of the faces rising, wheel on wheel, from that central hub of solemn-faced men in white ties and black coats, to the roof, to lose themselves at last in the shadows. The place murmurous as a great cathedral filled with worshippers. The white-gloved stewards, like acolytes, marshalling us ceremonially into our places as for some high ritual. And now come the strains of " The Union for Ever ! " march, like a chaunt to herald the approach of our Americanization.

And in the very centre of the very hub of the wheel, the square of snowy ropes, standing there bleak and cruel, under

the powerful arc-lights overhead, as an altar prepared for the sacrifice—and we, adoring, devotees.

And now the band has broken into that pioneer of Two-Steps: "Kelly," by the eminent composer, Murphy, glided into the waltz-song that has already stolen its way across three continents: "Beautiful Garden of Roses," and . . .

The murmur suddenly takes a higher note as in the distance there shows itself a long line of priests and acolytes bearing the vessels of their craft—the buckets and bottles and sponges—all swathed in white robes, the sweater and spotless flannels of the blameless life. In their middle the sacrifice—in a robe, knotted by cord about the slender waist, a high giant of a man, pale as neophitic victim.

There is a splutter of something that may be the hissing of the white arc-lights—then it has gathered to spume and is spitting itself into space with a bass undertone booming through it, and then it is beating against the roof like a great drum as we, the devotees, greet the White Hope.

"Hooray! Oh! God! Hooray-ay-ay!"

But another procession is already preparing in the far away. And this time we see the white-robed priests but not the sacrifice, which is hidden in their midst.

And such a sacrifice! black as Saturn himself.

He is a little man dressed in a robe in which all the stars of heaven seem to have been netted, out of which the tiny shaven head shows itself like that of a tortoise—behind him, a black colossus as attendant upon this afrit that might have stepped with him out of "The Thousand and One Nights."

For a moment there is silence and perhaps it is the ballad: "Shine on, Harvest Moon," which brings sweet solace to our waiting souls, then a murmur, and then a roar.

The roar this time is subdued, for this Black and White Peril is still fresh since Johnson defeated Jeffries that awful

day, only a year before, in San Reno and so sent the first shadow of coloured supremacy to affright.

Four white gloves are borne into the middle of the ring, for the black colossus to take two of them up into his great fists as though they were fairy gloves and, with frowning intent, to work back the padding from the knuckles so that they may do the work they have to do.

The great gong booms out and the butterflies have emerged from their chrysalises—the White in pale blue trunks, and the Black in trunks of emerald green with sash to match—a green that holds the eye against that body of cast bronze with its long rams of arms crowned by snowy gloves.

What a cry goes up from that throng as they shed their glory! Always excepting the solemn white-fronted men about the ring, who sit there in the glacial suppression that was the hall-mark of an aristocracy that had not yet mingled its blue blood with purse-proud plutocracy or had the hem of its politics touched by the hand of dishevelled democracy.

And now the silence has fallen again. For there is the black demon with his fan-shaped shoulders set in the tiny muscled cup of the hips, felinely intent upon his trail, dwarfly crouching after his high antagonist, who, in the silence, quarters away before that Black Menace. In the stillness, you can hear the *slish-slish* of the following feet.

There is a double smash like the crack of a bull whip as the two white gloves lash out to find their target on the high pale face above.

And then the gong goes, with the White Hope already only a hope and scarlet showing in the face like a danger signal.

Again and again, the gong chimes out for the opening and closing of five mortal rounds like the brassy clang of doom, with the referee, Eugene Corri by name, garbed like Beau Brummel himself, in the ring to watch each shattering punch detachedly, as a surgeon may examine a body. Again and

again, the White Hope gives ground, with black fate always treading remorseless on his heels. And now the long black arms are looping over the white guard and coming up in shattering upper-cuts to the angle of the jaw, and red runnels begin to show themselves in the face of White Australia.

Short half-arm jabs, wicked things that travel only six inches and rock the white giant to his heels, whilst he vainly seeks to shoot back his forceless left. Left hooks that wind round and through the guard. And now the little black devil is hacking like a woodman at the stomach, belly rips that bring him sagging like a tall tree to send him tottering to the boards, only to rise as the voice counts above: one-two-three-four-five. . . .

But now the counts are getting longer. Another hook has gone home like a whiplash; a shattering upper-cut has come weaving its way viciously up to the chin; the count has reached the nine—the fatal ten already looms . . . and then . . .

But who can write of that challenge to White supremacy on that night of February when Sam Langford of America whipped Bill Lang of Down Under? Who can write of the shudder that went through that horny-handed, glassy-fronted, soft-hearted crowd as White fouled Black—to let down the race and to lose the fight? Who can write of it?

A reverent hush had fallen as at the greater sacrifices. The referee, like some white-gloved and white-fronted heavenly prototype, had announced in that voice the passing of the supremacy of the White Race. The audience of long years ago had bowed its head to Fate, and then had filed out into the London night.

But the tang of the fight; the tang of the sawdust; the tang of life itself—was that not a sweeter bitterer thing twenty years ago than it is to-day?

I don't know. I only ask.

Lang *v.* Langford at Olympia

XVII

WIZARDS AND WAXWORKS

And so we leave the world of muscle and concrete reality to pass back into the world of "make-believe"—perhaps the only real world.

In these flickering memories of a London that is gone, I am writing, not as a specialist in the theatre or whatever it may be. I am writing as an average looker-on, in whose tale there will of necessity be many omissions and even contrarieties. Some of the men and women of whom I write, I will have known personally—some only as observer.

We were simple souls in those days. In our entertainment, we demanded very little from the scenic artist and the " dresser " and, as it seems to me, sometimes got very much more than the spoiled audiences of to-day, much as a child will enjoy and love her rag doll more than any creation of wax and flaxen hair. Like the child, we were forced to use our imaginations and did not have the food of our entertainment chewed for us into a sort of peptonized pap before it was served to us, as is so often done to-day. With us, in a very real sense, " the play was the thing."

The theatre of that day was still regarded by the Nonconformist Conscience, that is by millions, as a place of damnèd souls, and no one at all regarded it as a place of education. It was only " an entertainment." The music-hall was for millions a place of vice and shame. " Nice " people took their children to the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, or to the thrills of the Egyptian Hall, or to the waxy

horrors of Madame Tussaud's, which, in some way undefined, were supposed to have an "improving effect" upon the young idea. I can only say that for thousands "The Chamber of Horrors" was the sole outlet for the suppressed imaginations of twenty-five to thirty years ago, and starved youth thanked its God for Mrs. Maybrick and Jack the Ripper!

Everybody talked about the wonderful wax policeman at Madame's, and everybody told stories of how someone had asked him the way, only to receive a waxy stare. It was *the* story of the period. I remember sitting gingerly on a bench covered with faded crushed-strawberry silk, at the other end of which sat a little old lady in a poke bonnet, to watch her and to wonder at her immobility, and I can still remember my terror when I found that she was wax. We *were* simple souls in that day.

You could get "light refreshments" there if I remember aright, whilst the orchestra played "The Turkish Patrol." Music with food was then an almost unknown indecency.

Although I was a sturdy, upgrowing youth at the time, it took me half a dozen visits before I could get my imagination sufficiently under control to venture into that Chamber of Horrors, which was always forbidden to children. There, in the murderous twilights of that underground cellar, I found Mr. Palmer, the poisoner, and Mr. Charles Peace, the burglar, the latter of whom staggered my belief in the face as an index of depravity, for he was quite a nice little man. But the waxen horror that made my blood chill was the face of a mormonistic person who stood with blocks of cement about him in the middle of his kitchen, where he had been engaged in burying the bodies of the ladies—or was it gentlemen?—he had murdered.

However, it was all said to be "instructive and entertaining," a phrase which settled most things at that time.

Even the people who attacked the Chamber in the heavy-leaded columns of that day, could not get over Napoleon's carriage. It gave the final touch to the educational side of the far-famed establishment. And of course, you always visited Madame Tussaud's at night. In the day-time, horror lost its halo.

It was a waxwork age. The waxen fruit under the glass cover was the altar of thousands of little homes, and, for that matter, still is. To many, a wax effigy was more real than the living flesh and blood it represented, much as millions to-day will prefer a cheap phonograph to a good band. Perhaps, after all, the mind of the eighteen-nineties was not so very different from the mind of the nineteen-twenties.

Madame Tussaud's was, of course, horror pure and simple, unadulterated by mystery. If you wanted the latter, you naturally went to Maskelyne and Cook's " Egyptian Hall of Mystery."

Mr. Maskelyne was a perfect godsend to the newspapers when murders fell off or there was no real juicy divorce. with a lord in it, going.

When I stood in the queue outside the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, almost opposite the Burlington Arcade, I would see Mr. Maskelyne walk past us with his curious swing, his head a little on one side. He must even then have been in his sixties, but he was always scrupulously dressed in the shining topper without which no gentleman *was* a gentleman. His overcoat was of a dark smooth Melton, very well cut, his hands were invariably gloved, and I think he generally carried a well-rolled " gamp " under his arm. He looked the typical clubman rather than the professional entertainer and was, I believe, much respected in clubland. His hair, dyed black, was always brilliantined straight back, and he was the first professional conjurer to combine sleight of hand with " gentlemanliness," for, as I remember, the popular

entertainer in the 'nineties was, generally speaking, not regarded as quite " it."

We always opened with a pianist—a quaint little man, as much a fixture as the hall, who climbed on to the low platform, only a few feet below where we crouched in the box of a gallery.

He invariably played the same overture. Then, in the creepy light, bells would tinkle close to our ears and metal xylophones would chime under our noses and there would be " effects," consisting of blue lightning with thunder on the left. We were all frightfully thrilled and old ladies would " make offers " to get up to leave before the performance proper began—it was too much for them. To-day I have seen old ladies of seventy, looking like their own granddaughters, sit through a meaty revue without turning a hair !

David Devant, a chubby smiling young man and an excellent conjurer, would roll his sleeves back from his slender white arms and explain to us that he would not deceive us for worlds. We expected that introduction and if we had not got it I am sure we would not have so readily come again. We loved to be deceived in the 'nineties, when the dreadful child of to-day had not made his cynical appearance.

Which one of us does not remember the shadowgraphs, all done by Mr. Devant who, after addressing us, went behind a screen for the purpose and, as it seemed to me, so spoiled the illusion ?

There was an elderly virgin " doing herself up for the evening," holding hairpins in her mouth and putting on and taking off little pads of hair and " improvers," who was a miracle of life. There was a Romeo with a lute playing to a fierce Juliet who threw water over him from a balcony at frequent intervals, only to inflame his love the more, and there was a warty old man in a Liberty cap who smoked a

WHITE LIES: Society in the 'Nineties through the eyes of George Du Maurier

Frisky Spinster. "How many dances are you going to give me to-night, Captain Waxham?"

Captain Waxham. "Oh, I'm so sorry, but there's not enough men, you know, and I've just been told off by Mrs. Masham to dance with the girls who—a—who are not likely to get partners!"

(*Asks the Girl just behind him for three Waltzes and a Polka!*)

pipe with a prehensile mouth. And, do you know? even to-day I have seen nothing better than David Devant's shadows. After all, costly dresses and spectacular effects are not "entertainments."

Maskelyne Senior was supposed to be the terror of the spiritualists in an age when all spiritualists, without exception, were facilely considered as tricksters, and his book: "Sharps and Flats" was sold at each performance. Psychic research itself was in its infancy and was regarded as not quite respectable. Our world was then a very concrete world.

Mr. Maskelyne claimed to be able to do anything the mediums did, including the "levitation" feats of the great medium Home. Home was one of the few mediums of that day who was never discovered in a fraud. He was proved amongst others by Sir William Crookes, the discoverer of the "electron," who used his own special electrical appliances to test him.

There was quite a famous lawsuit at the time in connection, I think, with the "disappearing cabinet trick," in which Mr. Maskelyne made a lady disappear. He offered, if I recollect, £500 to any spiritualist medium who could reproduce the trick—and I think that the money was claimed by some spiritualist of the time. I know that Maskelyne Senior was challenged by the spiritualists to reproduce materialization and de-materialization *without apparatus!* The challenge was not accepted.

How many thousands have not seen Mr. Maskelyne, as a Hindoo magician, turbaned and robed, with his fan waft from the floor a recumbent man inch by inch until he was suspended in mid-air, apparently without any support other than the moral support of Mr. Maskelyne? How many have not seen the great conjurer take a brass hoop, ring it to prove it whole, and pass it several times backwards and

forwards from head to foot over the man to show that there were no aerial supports? All this to our exceeding amazement, for we could never quite reconcile the transformation of "our" Mr. Maskelyne into a Hindoo. It was indecent.

Oh! for the thrill when the hoop and other apparatus was handed around for our inspection and even the trembling transient joy of appearing in public by stepping on to the stage was not denied to us, the devotees. For we were simple souls—but what would not some of us give if for one night the old Egyptian Hall could come back and that we could be titillated by the tinkle of the patent piano and once more feel the hair rise on our heads at the "effects"!

But those things do not come twice in a lifetime. Perhaps we could not bear them if they did

XVIII

"THE CRACK OF THE BONES AND THE TAMBOURINE"

The lights are up in the old St. James's;
I hear the patter of feet in my dream;
I catch the voices now stilled for ever—
The crack of the bones and the tambourine.

Oh! for the old familiar places
Oh! for the nights when the banjo was queen,
Oh! for the old familiar faces—
The crack of the bones and the tambourine.

The Old Minstrel.

I HAVE been writing about "the simple 'nineties" and the simple pleasures of that day when Madame Tussaud's and Maskelyne and Cook's were for thousands the very superlative of delightful entertainment.

It seems to me that life had then a flavour which it has since lost, and especially West End life. It seems to many of us, as we look on that day and this, that whereas in the 'nineties we "lived" our pleasures, to-day we are "playing at" pleasure. Our pleasures were less hectic and showy, but they were deeper.

The modern night club exactly exemplifies this "playing at pleasure," as it certainly exemplifies paying for it. For who would pretend that the hectic pretence of the night club holds within it either satisfaction or joy? The modern *cabaret* is often but a grimace. The gorgeous *revue* but a super-grimace. And the boys and girls of to-day are so often *old*—old in a way that we never were.

In the old days, when you watched the faces of the men and women " up West," you usually watched happy faces. There was no straining after enjoyment, for in those days enjoyment came from the inside, not from the outside. Our pleasures were evolved, not superimposed. When you went into the West End bar, whether it was the " private " or the " public " department, you sipped your glass of Jameson or drank your glass of " four-ale " with the quiet assurance that the lady or gentleman next to you was experiencing the same sure enjoyment as yourself. You put your foot upon the brass rail under the bar and felt in the tail of your frock coat for your handkerchief with which to wipe away the froth of ale that was not a chemical formula, " with an air "—the air of quiet enjoyment.

The man next you was perhaps not so quick at striking up acquaintance with you as is the man of to-day, and feminine high-voiced youth had not yet made its appearance. But the cabby who drove you off to your " hall " was a rubicund rollicking creature who talked to you as if he were your father—a father who was more than ready to fight you for his fare at the end of the journey. The " marker " in the Shaftesbury Avenue " pub " which I used to affect, was my very dear friend, even though I only knew him as " Joe," a Joe to be stood " bitters " till further notice, but a Joe who showed you the ropes and would become slightly confidential after the ninth bitter upon the respective merits of John Roberts, Dawson and Stevenson.

The " pubs " were " 'omes from 'ome," as Joe would call them, and the " Time, gents, if *you* please," a blessed kiss-me-to-sleep good night. The streets were friendly streets, in which, along a stretch of a hundred yards in Leicester Square or Piccadilly, you would greet and be greeted by half a dozen acquaintances.

When after the theatre or the hall, you foregathered in

Little Thomas

Master Buffery Harry Hunter

Johnny Danvers

The Old Mohawk Moore and Burgess Minstrels

that upper chamber of the gilded public-house overlooking the lights of Leicester Square, you met at least a couple of fellows of the right sort, who would smoke their BBB's or have a draw at a sixpenny Havana in happy comradeship, and when, frankly, all the tawdry vice and wickedness around became mellowed in one common humanity. You went into that enchanted club, for that was what it was to thousands, about 11.15 and you stayed until 12.30 a.m. (" Closing time, gents, please.")

The cabbies, enswathed inextricably and looking rather like boiled lobsters, sat perched on their " dickies " and prowled along the pavement as you came out, and, as likely as not, you might spend the rest of the night with a red-faced gentleman whom you had never seen before and would never see again, in driving from coffee stall to coffee stall and wandering into perilous places of the London wilderness. For it was a friendly world.

What has become of all that old-time friendliness and of all that old-time simplicity, when the girl—and what a big girl she was !—who sold the vi-i-i-o-lets under the Mercury in Piccadilly was a friend and a fairy godmother in one, who sometimes called you " Bertie " and lovingly pinned in the bunch of Parmas into the collar of your evening-dress coat ? What has become of the top-hatted London night with its magnolia buttonholes ? Where are the funny little corners in funny little pubs around Duke Street and Jermyn Street in the golden glow of which men would foregather of a summer's night to pick the winner of the Derby and to whisper, with a wink, of the often entirely imaginary doings of His Royal Highness Albert Edward Prince of Wales ? And where, oh where, is the Madame Tussaud waxwork, the magic of Maskelyne, and, above all, the Moore and Burgess minstrel—where is the simple friendliness of it all ?

From a little up the street on the other side of Piccadilly

comes the whack of tambourine and the rattle of the bones, and once more we are back in the old St. James's Hall, the home of " black-face."

We have been waiting a whole hour in the most dismal paved passage in London in the queue at the foot of some grisly stairs. There is no earthly reason why we should wait, for there is usually plenty of room in the gallery—but we liked to be in time in the 'nineties and sure of our place. All the same, the waiting made us feel ourselves " dogs " in the doing.

What a bare hall it was! It was some years before in the same building but not the same hall, as I have elsewhere said, that I first heard John Redmond exhort his Irish legions to the skirl of the pipes—for there were two halls, one larger than the other.

The forms on the floor with high hard backs; the flinty gallery; the shallow stage with the " niggers " in layers each above the other; the half-score of musicians; and, the only touch of colour, the two lines of reserved front seats with red upholstery for the infrequent swell.

Moore and Burgess were, I think, the successors to the old Christy Minstrels and had taken over the best of the latter when Mr. " Pony " Moore formed them. He was known as " Pony " because he was popularly supposed never to bet less than a " pony " or £25. He often bet £500, which was a " monkey," but nobody ever called him Monkey Moore. I wonder why?

That, at least, was the popular belief about Mr. Moore's cognomen. His own explanation was different. He said that when he was in America (he was, I believe, a son of Uncle Sam) in a circus, he broke all records upon his benefit night by driving forty ponies together. " Pony " Moore was, I think, father-in-law of the renowned scrapper, Charlie Mitchell, as of another celebrity—Eugene Stratton, who

with the Moore and Burgess achieved fame by his famous whistling song: " The Whistling Coon." Eugene, called upon by the interlocutor, had a quick way of, so to speak, jumping into his stride with a hollow haunting whistle that was later to make him a happy memory wherever the English flag floated. And what an elegant looseness of joint!

We had a priceless interlocutor who was, I think, known as Harry Hunter. Harry was a magnificent fellow of about six foot three, and in his white kid gloves and spotless shirt front he sat like a life-guardsman on his horse as he solemnly addressed the end man:

" Good evening, Joe."

" Good evening, Mr. Hunter."

" I heard that you were seen last night walking down the Strand in company with a nice young lady? "

" You heard that I was seen last night walking down the Strand with a nice young lady, Mr. Hunter? " the end man would ask, for all questions were repeated so as to give the not-too-quick audience a chance to hear them—also, it added to the effect and followed a certain prescribed ritual.

" Yes, I heard that you were seen going down the Strand. . . ." Mr. Hunter would reply, and so on and so on, whilst we dwelt on and ate every word to repeat them next morning over the breakfast table before we went to the city.

We were, I fear, terrible jingoes in those days, the days of popular refrain:

> We don't want to fight,
> But by jingo! if we do,
> We've got the ships;
> We've got the men;
> We've got the money, too!

We were aggressively modest, and I don't think it had entered into any of our heads that England would not

always rule the waves and the round world itself, and when we fought it was only a question of how long it would take before putting the other fellow down for the count. We got a nasty fright in the Boer War a year or two later, but . . .

All the Powers at that time were scrambling for China ; and I remember the refrain of Johnny Danvers, who always began his songs with a broad grin and, licking the tips of his fingers ran them downwards once or twice over his hair. It went something like this :

France went into the China Shop
With the others close behind ;
England, France, and Germany
Cried out : " Here's a find ! "
But old John Bull was taking his time,
Said : " Nothing could be finer,
For I'll be there
With time to spare
When there's a smashing of China ' "

How the choir roared out the chorus and how we loved it all !

Johnny, despite a slight " om-bong-pong," was the lightest man on his feet of that day, save San Leno, who was the champion clog-dancer of the world, won in open competition. Nobody could hit a tambourine like Johnny. I have seen him hit it and make sweet music out of it with nose, ears, head, feet, elbows—everything but his hand . . . and how he could run it tinkling down his leg ! And when I saw him in the nigger minstrel revival in the Palladium after the War, when middle-aged London once more renewed its youth, age could not wither the centres of his being. He was younger than ever.

One other figure of the Moore and Burgess boards stands out in my memory, that of Little Thomas, who always " shouted " his songs. Which of us can forget the little darky of the rubber stomach, one of the corner men, who

after the preliminary "patter" between Mr. Hunter and himself, would advance to the centre of the stage and, without warning of any kind, open a cavernous crimson gullet in the blackness of Darkest Africa, and then proceed to lift the roof? Only one man of our day has rivalled that tremendous voice, now, alas! stilled for ever—and that man, Harry Champion.

But I think the backbones in more senses than one of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels were the painfully attenuated young gentlemen, the chief of whom was a Master Buffery, obviously outgrowing their nether garments, who, with enormous eyes set in coal-black faces and hand on watch-chain (they were excessively genteel) sang such mordant trifles as "Close the shutters, Willie's dead," or "Mother, I hear the angels' wings a-wafting of me home," or songs to that effect, for their actual titles escape me. The refrains in particular, sung *pianissimo* by the full strength of the chorus, were excruciatingly touching, so that often we saw the singers through a mist of tears. The voices of these soloists were often curiously fine, though without souls, with high notes that had to be heard to be believed and not always even then—but they always sang with faces of wood and whether they felt or even knew what they sang, this deponent sayeth not.

Only the other day I saw the last of the hansoms crawling along the Piccadilly kerb, just where the St. James's used to stand, with the cabby's top-hat worm-eaten and the hansom's glories faded, and once more the lights were up in the old St. James's. Johnny's tambourine is whacking itself saucily at the end of the long white-fronted line; the solemn interlocutor has begun his "Now then, Johnny, I heard that last night you were seen walking down the Strand. . . "

But I forgot. That was long ago . . . so long ago.

XIX

"BOXING NIGHT" AT DRURY LANE

BOXING DAY outside the Drury Lane pantomime, and the rheum of the London December afternoon with the frost glistening upon the paving stones and on the very red nose of the old man with the hair sticking up like straws through his bowler who crawls along our line with his: "A cawper, for Gawd's sike, Sir!"

The show begins at 7.30, doesn't it? and it is now only one of the afternoon. But even if we get killed when the great doors open we are going to get into that pit in order to enter the gates of heaven, with Arthur Collins as Saint Peter, and, as I think, having to pay an extra "tanner" or sixpence for the privilege, for "The Lane" pit was 3s.

A shrimp of a man with a concertina and a voice like the wailings of a lost soul has come and gone, more like a wraith than a human being. Every individual blind man in London has been led along our thin grey line. Despite my youth, I have a cramp in my left leg. But I got there at eleven of the clock.

The hours drag themselves by like mouching schoolboys, laggard to work. We have heard midday booming itself through the fog—time dragging on leaden feet. "One" has clanged solitarily, and the "two," as it seems, three hours afterwards. Three, four, five, six . . . we hear the hours go on the city clocks. And then, when we have given up hope, there is that thrill indescribable along the line, a resurgence of distant doors, followed by a booming, a resistless urge,

and after a struggle in which I lose two buttons and my temper, I am in!

The great desert of the stalls is empty before us, for of course the swells have not come yet, and, what with the dimly burning lights and the fog that has crept murderously into the theatre, the place seems full of ghosts. So do we stamp our feet and surreptitiously suck our oranges and chocolates to pass the time.

"Gawd! look at the toffs."

It comes from the girl in the thunder and lightning "waist" who finds herself by my side in the very front of the pit, her eyes staring. She is watching the Late Victorian dresses of a richness and superfluity now unknown and unknowable, as they stroll into the stalls of the vast auditorium with its Lion and Unicorn fighting over the centre of the second largest stage in London. Awfully smart boys in Eton jackets and with soap-pink faces are filling the boxes with muslined sisters and with bald-headed papas and primly indulgent mamas. "The Lane" is in semi-darkness —a limbo that fairly breathes expectancy.

The orchestra, a round hundred of 'em, who have been wailing and moaning and groaning and trumpeting in the way of orchestras during the tuning-up, are now sitting tautly anticipatory. They are waiting for the great moment and the Great Man.

They are both here!

Surging from the depths like a monster of the deep coming up to blow, as the lights go up, comes a great nose, a shining monocle and a great head with half an acre of glossy shirt. Jimmy Glover turns his pachydermatous back upon his orchestra to face a house packed to the limit of toleration, with a smile of roguishness like that of a handsome Punch. The slender bâton lifts itself in the small white-gloved hand—and they are off!

Let—her—go!

"Hi-tiddley-hi-ti-hi-ti-ti" . . . "The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" . . . "The Dear Homeland" . . . the rampant opening song of "The Toreador" at the Gaiety . . . the reminiscently mystical "Hush! hush! hush! here comes the Bogey Man" . . . and the insinuating "Johnny get your gun." They ripple out from that slender wand. "Soldiers of the Queen" and the audience are stiffening; "Little Dolly Daydream" and they are dreaming; "Comrades" and they are crying. "After the ball;" "Her golden hair was hanging down her back"; "In the pale moonlight"; "Fighting with the Seventh Royal Fusiliers"; and "The Miner's Dream of Home." That bâton conjures them out from the past one after the other—a magic wand that unlocks the felted doors of memory.

Twenty-five or thirty years ago, we were frightfully proper, but already there is a sort of slumberous chorus running through the riot as the pitites and the amphitritons above let 'emselves go.

Jimmy, still roguish, is nodding to his friends as they file into the stalls whilst he continues to wave his magic stave, the most seductive in London town. He knows everybody. Everybody knows him.

Jimmy—we adored you. We adore you still and you are still with us, substantial ghost of an unsubstantial past.

And, oh God!—again from the lady in the thunder and lightning on my right as the biggest curtains on earth swing up and outwards to show a dream staircase running up to heaven like a never-ending Jacob's ladder, with the stage itself spacially empty. A tiny door opens at the extreme top of the staircase for a funny little figure to shoot from it and to take the first flight on its nose. The little figure pulls itself together, totters a flimsy instant, half turns, and takes the next section of the stairs on its tail;

Herbert Campbell and Dan Leno, a memory of Drury Lane

shooting the last on eyebrow and shoulder, with a most gorgeous somersault at the bottom, where it sits rubbing its small head ruefully as though it rather wondered how it had got there.

But the auditorium is now thundering. The gods are whistling from aloft. The pitites are howling. Even the stalls are applauding genteelly with white-gloved hands.

Dan Leno.

Oh! Dan darling, how we loved you—greatest of all. Never shall we look upon your like again. We hang on the movable property that is your eyebrows and follow each quip, breathless. When you jerk your jackanapes arms and legs, our hearts jerk with you. When you walk across the desert of the stage holding on to the elbow of the Queen of the Chorus, which you can just reach, we walk with you and wish that you could have the whole damned lot, Queen and all. For that one night you are married to the whole harem of beauties and we wish you luck and envy them.

What are you? Mother Goose? I cannot remember. Though you are dressed as an old beldame with impossible skirts and indecorous ankles, we know you for Dan. You can't deceive us. We love you.

There is a man-mountain, of Falstaffian corpulence and with Henry the Eighth cheeks and whiskers, dressed in white satin knickers and stockings and a white, expansive, satin coat and the good Lord alone knows what he is supposed to be. But he is your antithesis and your butt. He jokes ponderously while you rattle off him like Chinese crackers

You pass with him through adventures never contemplated by the author, and you "gag" him until he hates you, for who could follow such a Will o' the Wisp as yourself when you jump over your "lines" and lead the big man into a wordy morass? You bang him over the "napper" and you stick your long and doubtless dirty nails into the tenderer portions

of his bulbous anatomy. But you not do move the gelatinous one, who is as impassive as Big Ben.

And, oh joy ! the first of the—what were they called ?—"transformations." Only a very little one, with modified females gyrating and posturing—merely a sop to Cerberus ; something to give him an appetite.

Is it a languid gentleman who must indeed be the laziest juggler on earth, who is now discovered lying in bed at ten o'clock of the morning, surrounded by an assortment of gigantic alarum clocks and a baby in a cradle ? At least you assume something is there, for the bedclothes are pulled over the gentleman's head, and if the panto is not "Mother Goose," but another, what's the odds so long as you're happy !

Bang goes one of the clocks. Not a move from the bed. Bang goes another of the clocks. Still not a motion. Bang goes a third, and a long lean arm shoots out from under the clothes and sweeps clock No. 1 to the floor, another arm comes round the other way to do the same to clock No. 2, whilst a pendulous foot erupts from the bottom of the bed and kicks clock No. 3 in the middle of its face. The gentleman, still half asleep, and in a very short nightshirt, does a little gentle juggling with the clocks or anything that lies handy, including the baby, to wake himself up. He then gets to work, as it appears his very much better half has been out all night trying to get the vote, although all this was long before the day of the suffragette, and as he, or someone else says : "Ain't woman's rights men's wrongs ? "

With a portentous scrubbing-brush he takes the infant and stands it in a foot bath, whilst he scrubs the hair off its head, and then as calmly turns it upside down to stand it on its head in the water whilst he scrubs its unoffending feet.

Without foolish preparation, we find ourself in the middle of another "transformation "—"The Blue Cave of the

Gnomes," or something as like it as no matter. And then another . . and yet another, unbelievable, passing for the moment to what looks like a dangerous anti-climax called "The Bower of Venus," for what "Grand Finale" can eclipse this? and these were the two stock scenes of all the Lane pantos.

Where are those London girls of yesterday with their bounteous bosoms and tremendous hips and tiny waists laced into the eighteen-twenty-two regulation? Where are those houris, who, stepping like well-trained circus horses, and with bows of exotic flowers held high over their plumed heads, marched and counter-marched to Jimmy Glover's bâton—high-steppers if you like! Where are those glorious blondes with cascades of gold upon their dove-eyed, leaded brows? Where are the slender slab-sided virgins, who, as fairy juniors, held themselves in positions quite contrary to nature if not to art?

Grandmothers? No, impossible. They were immortals and have doubtless, like the holier things of life, suffered transfiguration rather than dissolution. Somewhere, after their immortal hour, they live—in memory if nowhere else, in a youth undying.

I crouch there in the pit and lose my transmigratory heart to each one individually. Never was there such a heartless flirt! I adore one six-footer at seven minutes past nine only to reject her inexorably at the ten minutes past and to fling myself and my broken bleeding heart at the feet of a five foot sixer, whom I forget before the minute hand has travelled fifty beats of the clock. I am for that evening—perhaps we all are—a veritable Brigham Young. I regard them as of an unattainable and pristine purity—but I love 'em all. I riot in them, so to speak. But we all do. Even the naughty bald-headed papas in the stalls with their women-folk looking at them angrily over their fans.

A great bow-wow has come out from the wings to the screaming delight of the kiddies. Towser is the knowingest dog of them all. He comes on with his young friend—what's his name ?—and rolls his goo-goo eyes and puts out his tongue and has the cunningest paw of all dogdom. A dog's life indeed !

He waves his paw from side to side as he examines the mathematical problem set him by his young friend, to exclude all possibility of further discussion. He gnaws his bone, about the size of the backbone of a man, with masterly detachment, and then runs for a little stroll around the edge of the boxes—but now he has become a great cat, and his other name is " Conquest." For in this magic box of memory, four-dimensional, all our pantos are, so to speak, truncated.

But now Dan and Herbert, to our joy, in those days when airships were but ships of dreams, are to go up into the air, what time Marie George, daintiest of Gretchen-comediennes, watches a-tremble from beneath : although whether she loves Dan or Herb, or somebody else altogether, is beyond the knowledge of man.

Up they go with Dan, as I think as " Mrs. Goose," frying some yards of sausage over the spinning tail and getting the screw hopelessly involved with the sausages which fall down in " hugeous " festoons to our delight. Herbert, in the bows, is weighing down an airship which is obviously a misfit.

Now they are over Whitehall, and Dan, with a telescope, is watching a Government clerk " at work "—for nothing changes. Ten to four and two hours for lunch is his sarcastic refrain in a ribald song in which he is joined by Herbert and by an audience as delighted as any audience of to-day to have a crack at the civil servant—for nothing changes. And what do they not see ?

The horse-guards sitting like great scarlet lobsters fresh-

boiled at the Horse Guards. Old Nelson with his blind eye trying to find virtue in Trafalgar Square. The Westminster "Gas House" (more ribaldry) manufacturing political gas in large quantities and regardless of the expense to the poor taxpayer. They—they see everything.

Afterwards they descend from the sublimities for Dan Leno to sing to us that classic: "The Wasp and the hard-boiled Egg," the chaste beauty of which only begins to seep into our souls after the thirty-ninth verse with its eternal:

> Here was the wasp;
> There was the egg—
> The wasp and the hard-boiled egg.

a tale of hopeless love and fearsome jealousy.

Is it a Miss Alma Jones who in high Welsh soprano makes our hearts and ears ring with "Dreams, dreams, just idle dreams," or did that come in another Lane pantomime?

I don't know, but the lady in the "thunder and lightning" feathers at my side has fainted under such tumultuous appeal and I, gallant but perspiring, have to carry her out into the passage (the first time, let it be here noted, I have ever held a girl in my arms) where, with a couple of pretty programme sellers, we revive her, with my back discreetly turned whilst they do certain things to her . . and then carry her back again!

We come back to be absorbed into a golden dream. The grand finale, "Love's Heaven," which indeed might be called after the famous picture: "The Earthly and the Heavenly Love," for we are now slightly mixed, with two sweating gentlemen in shirt sleeves and, as I think, with a pint of pewter handy to their elbows, who, in the wings, reveal themselves indecently as masters of the levers. A pull, and a sweet little fairy, dainty as a midsummer's night dream, shoots like a star across the upper air Another pull,

and she flies back again. And now the starry background is alive with sprites and Pucks who sway dizzily on thin air, and the anti-climax of Whimsical Walker and the harliquinade still to come are forgotten. For we are already getting spoiled even though we are only just passing the turn of the century.

Grouped in this heaven of love beneath the flying sprites, in plumed rows that might be cherubim and seraphim, are the goddesses, blonde and brunette—far finer than anything heaven itself can offer we are assured in our own materialistic minds. There they range themselves in rows and circles of glittering gold and blue ; of purple and white and green, of shimmering silver and gleaming sapphire—right up to where the star-flecked clouds hang under the roof. The band is playing. The people are stamping. The curtain is falling. . . .

And on to the stage there steps a neat compact figure in evening dress—the *deus ex machina*—Arthur Collins himself, to receive an ovation denied to any king. We are in the seventh heaven. The great night is over.

XX

THE AGE OF THE ACTOR-MANAGER AND SOME OLD-TIME "FIRST NIGHTS"

In these days of *revue* and "the pictures," it is not easy to bring to the present generation the glories of the old-time "first nights," when Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, George Alexander and Charles Wyndham, Beerbohm Tree and Mrs. Patrick Campbell were kings and queens of the stage. For the glory of the age of the actor-manager has departed.

Some of these first nights were sacred observances rather than theatrical presentations. When Irving announced that he was going to put on "Hamlet" or "The Merchant of Venice," it was to a world breathlessly expectant that he announced it, a world waiting to worship at his shrine. There were, indeed, thousands who would rather have had a single word from Irving, king of tragedy, than a decoration from any king in Europe.

Irving dominated quietly but surely the London theatre of that time. His harsh, almost forbidding appearance in mufti; his tremendous reputation; the skull-like form of his face; his long straight hair and piercing eyes; his characteristic stoop and slouch across the boards; and, above all, that phantasmal voice, a voice from a tomb—all combined to make him the most formidable dramatic figure of his day.

And yet, even now, I cannot put my finger upon the exact

quality which made us all think of Irving as a superman; only when I see the ultra-moderns slightly lift their psycho-analytical brows as they hear us speak of the master tragedian of his time, I can but whisper to myself: "If they had only seen him!"

The great man staged his triumphs either at that Mecca of theatre-goers, the Lyceum, or at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. It would have broken the heart of Henry Irving had he lived to see that temple of tragedy where once he had strutted as king, fallen upon evil days to pass into vulgar melodrama and even to sink to vaudeville.

It was a May evening about a quarter of a century ago that the Theatre Royal was packed to its last private box with all the rank and fashion of a London that is dead, to see Irving as Shylock. Only yesterday—and yet, how long!

On that cast of twenty people, the Old Master alone stood out in solitary and awful grandeur without a "Mr." before his name. The Bassanio was Mr. Gerald Lawrence, at that time the best-looking young man on the stage. Jessica was the static though beautiful Mrs. Cecil Rayleigh, and the Portia was Edith Wynne Mathison, who twenty years later, though on other stages, is still comely and quietly effective as ever. The musical directors were Sydney Faulks and the one and only Jimmy Glover of Drury Lane, and the *entr'acte*, Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance," then novel, but fitting to the occasion.

The stalls were filled with women thoroughly well corseted and with voluminous dresses, *décolleté* it is true, but of a restrained modesty contrasted with the V-backs of to-day. The men, of course, wore white gloves, white waistcoats, and white magnolias in their button-holes, and I do not know what would have happened had any of them appeared at the front door in a soft hat or a bowler! If he had "crashed"

the commissionaire, which is doubtful, he would have been "crushed" inside.

There is not, with perhaps one or two exceptions, a single actor of tragedy upon the English stage of to-day who is fit to powder Irving's nose. When the strange figure appeared from the wings, the skeleton head thrust slightly forward, the shoulders with the characteristic stoop, and that dragging foot which fascinated, there was not a man or woman there who did not thrill to the opening words grating to the ear: "Three thousand ducats; well?" Or later with that compelling voice, hoarse as a corncrake but never squeaky, to speak the lines: "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions. senses, affections, passions? . if you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? . . . and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"

His Shylock was of a dreadful humourless significance—his masterpiece. His hands became claws of doom. His voice, a voice indicting all Christendom. He grew before our eyes that night at the Theatre Royal from a man into a symbol, until his shadow seemed to grow up from the stage to hover over us, with stooped back, accusing eyes, and hooked talons outstretched to tear out our hypocritical Christian hearts. Never have I seen such acting.

Here was the cast at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on that May night of long ago:

Shylock	Henry Irving.
Bassanio	Mr. Gerald Lawrence
Duke of Venice ..	Mr. Mark Paton.
Antonio	Mr. James Hearn.
Prince of Morocco ..	Mr. Frank Tyars.
Salanio	Mr. William Lugg.
Salarino	Mr. Lionel Belmore
Gratiano	Mr. H. B. Stamford
Lorenzo	Mr. Vincent Sternroyd.
Tabal	Mr. J. Archer
Launcelot Gobbo ..	Mr. Charles Dodsworth.

Old Gobbo	.. ..	Mr. T. Reynolds
Gaoler	.. ..	Mr. W. Graham.
Leonardo	.. ..	Mr. H. R. Cook.
Balthazar	.. ..	Mr. W. Marion.
Stephano	.. ..	Mr. W. L. Ablett.
Clerk of the Court	..	Mr. F. D. Daviss
Jessica	.. ..	Mrs. Cecil Rayleigh.
Nerissa	.. ..	Miss Cicely Richards.
Portia..	.. ..	Miss Edith Wynne Matthison.

How the single actor-manager of that age of the actor-manager overshadowed his contemporaries cannot, perhaps, be more clearly demonstrated than by the above cast, in which, save for one or two names, only that of Henry Irving is remembered

All that have followed the burning periods of Irving as Shylock are rushlights to a sun.

It was a June night of exactly twenty-five years ago that " Mr. Herbert Beerbohm Tree "—he was not yet Sir Herbert —put on " The Merry Wives of Windsor " at Her Majesty's. Ellen Terry was Mistress Page and she was partnered by two of the most lightsome " wives " that ever pinched Falstaff—the Mistress Anne Page and Mistress Ford of Mrs. Tree and Mrs. Kendal, that finely balanced actress with her sense of repose and finish.

Those who were fortunate enough to see Ellen Terry that memorable evening, saw acting brought to the plane when it ceases to be acting and becomes life. There was a bubble lightsomeness about Ellen Terry that night that was the very spirit of Shakespeare's comedy It was England, Elizabethan England, at her best.

Only to see her move was a joy, with, as her foils, Beerbohm Tree as Falstaff—a miraculously transposed Beerbohm —Courtice Pounds as the Welsh parson, and the jovial rubicund Lionel Brough, one of *the* Broughs, as mine host of the " Garter " Inn. There was a fine fruitiness about

SERIO-COMIC PORTRAITS.

SIR H-NRY IRV-NG.

"Sir Henry"

Lionel, which went well with the lusciousness of Courtice, who had a voice that would charm the birds off the trees.

I will only say this of Ellen Terry. She could play any part and she could hold any audience. There was a lissome elfin quality about her which is not to be conveyed in words, and surely no female creature that has lived on this earth ever had more primal vitality.

There was a sort of spiritual essence surrounding her that seemed to come from some secret interior fount. She was as human as woman and as elemental as fey.

Our own " Ellen " passes across the stage of those days. Now she is Beatrice in " Much Ado About Nothing " at the chastely beautiful Imperial, when Mrs. Lily Langtry was lessee. With her on that night of June are playing Oscar Asche, a gigantic Benedick, and handsome Julian l'Estrange as Don Pedro, whilst her son, Gordon Craig, still the world's most revolutionary scenic craftsman, is producer. Again, she is partnering her playmate Henry Irving, in Shakespeare. But whatever she does, she drifts across the vision like a thing of light, trailing behind her clouds of glory. What a felicity must be hers, as the twitterlight draws down, to be haunted by the happy memories she has given to countless thousands ! Happy, happy Ellen Terry !

Amongst the first nights that linger in the memory faintly fragrant, are those of four of the actor-managers of that day : Charles Wyndham and Martin Harvey, George Alexander and Charles Hawtrey, perhaps one of the greatest versatile light-comedy actors the English stage has produced. For good or ill, the decline of the actor-manager meant the decline of great acting, whatever it may have done to the average. Some of these nights were great, some " little," but here as elsewhere in this section, take the pieces which have remained evergreen, irrespective of their merit, artistic or otherwise.

I am back once more at the old St. James's, reading my programme with the beefeater on the cover, the programme which once bore the proud announcement: "The Theatre is lighted by Electricity," and watching George Alexander as the splendidly priggish John Worthing, J.P., in Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of being Earnest." He comes on with his sadly pervading air, in that undertakerish black morning coat and trousers, deep mourning hatband, glossy cuffs striped with black, and neatly folded umbrella, in that slender effort of Wilde, for I must admit that to-day Wilde's "Importance" seems strangely unimportant. and as one looks back, one realizes how much "living in the time" gives significance to any book or any play, for only the greater creations can ignore the strait jacket of period. He called it "a trivial comedy for serious people," and it was trivial, but not perhaps in the sense he intended. For Wilde was then a god who had not yet suffered dethronement.

One sees George, the immaculate George, the only adjective that fits, banal though it be, as he passes across the St. James's stage of twenty-five years ago. George, darling of the *matinée* girl, a slight suggestion of bounderishness to give him flavour, making love, and *such* love, to the leading lady, in *such* a pair of unmentionables and with *such* a smile! Slender George, with his way of talking, of walking, and of dressing that was so inexpressibly "gentlemanly."

George Alexander's snobbishness clothed him as with a garment, and I rather fancy that, like his friend Tree, he suffered from what would be called to-day a "superiority" complex. Well, he had something about which to be superior.

Those were the days when the stalls were half a guinea, the dress circle 7s., and the "Upper Boxes, Numbered and Reserved (Bonnets allowed), 4s.," not forgetting the "Carriages at 10.45." And on the programme were

advertised "Epps's Cocoa, grateful—comforting"; "the celebrated H.B. Corsets for ladies desiring a graceful long-waisted figure, from 2s. 11d. to 21s. per pair"; and "Tatcho."

But George Alexander had another and, for some, an unexpected side.

It was on the evening of the 6th of March, 1902, that the fine young English poet, Stephen Phillips, who died before he came to his own, had his "Paola and Francesca" produced by George Alexander at the St. James's. Alexander himself was Giovanni, the tyrant of Rimini, whilst such names as Lyall Swete, Arthur Machen, Elizabeth Robins, and Lilian Braithwaite were in the cast. It was in the part of the Tyrant that George Alexander reached his highest flights as actor. The brooding shadow of this deformed cripple, coldly brutal in the mediæval Italian way as the ferocious Giovanni Malatesta, tracking down the lover of his young wife, was a revelation of a man who had hitherto largely confined himself to *ingénu* parts.

The Francesca was Evelyn Millard, a dream of loveliness, who was the bride of the Tyrant and in love with Paolo, called Il Bello, and beautiful he was, this brother of Giovanni, for his name was Henry Ainley.

Of that London night, I can only say that the picture of Paolo and Francesca disclosing each their love for the other, as together in that far-off Italian spring, they read out of the book that told the story of Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, will remain with each one of us who heard them, as an echo, haunting-sweet.

The "actor-managers" usually professionally worked in couples with stage-partners of the other sex, very often their wives.

Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore; Irving and Ellen Terry; Cyril Maud and his wife. Miss Winifred

Emery; Martin Harvey and his wife, Miss N. de Silva; Forbes Robertson and Gertrude Elliott, also husband and wife. Beerbohm Tree also sometimes acted with Mrs. Tree, but rarely. But almost all these actor-managers were vitally different in method. Indeed, they showed astonishing individuality.

Take Charles Wyndham, for example. No other actor-manager in London, save the other Charlie—Charlie Hawtrey—could so invest the commonplace with significance. Charles, afterwards Sir Charles Wyndham, had been a surgeon in the American Civil War, so even at this time he was no blushing *ingénu*. He could put his hands carelessly into the pockets of his well-cut lounge and stand looking into a fire, with *that* foot on the fender, and make you believe that only elderly youth could be charming, and he had half the flappers (*we* called them " young ladies ") in London in love with him at a time when he was almost old enough to be their grandfather.

Miss Mary Moore, his dramatic *vis-à-vis*, a gentle dove-like creature, we all remember. She was for thousands the ideal of virtuous womanhood and always, and in any part, had an indefinable suggestion of motherhood. When she left the stage the Victorian mother passed with her.

But Charlie was " Charlie." I really believe that the secret of his unholy charm for us was that in his stage presentations he, in some indefinable way, gave the idea of a fellow who led a fearful life, but in *such* a decent way that nobody could be angry with him. And all the women were eager to reform him, that is to say, were in love with him. For does not every woman love a rake ?

Even now, all these years after, I can see his sangfroid in a South American revolutionary play at the Prince of Wales. He was clothed in white duck and he used a fan as no male mortal has done before or since. In an age when

cocktails were not, he absorbed iced shandygaff with entire urbanity—who could do it like him?—and, unlike the versatile Tree, the man who was the most natural actor in London, could only act one part—the part that was himself.

Of the same school was Cyril Maude, who is still with us, only that Cyril was more versatile.

Who can forget the youthful blonde officer (how young they are kept, these fellows!) as the " Second " in " The Second in Command " at the Haymarket, with that slight and fascinating lisp?

To have seen at this period Beerbohm Tree as the broken figure in Kipling's " The Man who came back," with his ornate, innate sense of tragedy and dramatic dishevelment at His Majesty's, and then to have crossed the road to see Cyril Maude cool as a cucumber as the " Second," would have been to see the greatest contrast in London town. Maude, taking his curtain with slender, friendly ease—and then Tree, still dishevelled, bowing magnificently like a king who had lost his crown.

Johnston Forbes-Robertson was one of the great tragic actors of that period, with his cathedral voice and diction of a distinguished grace. His " Hamlet," the grave of so many distinguished actors, was, as it seems to me, the finest thing of the kind I ever saw. Some of us still remember the hush which fell upon his audience when those deep, rounded tones were heard. It was like being in church.

Martin Harvey was and is a fine artist, crippled by his followers. At this time he was playing in the play that was at once his success and his doom—" The Only Way." He made such an impression in the leading part that people began to associate him with this single character and would not let him play any other—at least not with the box office success he deserved.

I remember being taken into his dressing-room in a

Shaftesbury Avenue theatre when he and his wife had been playing in "The Breed of the Treshams." He stood there in shirt sleeves, the white grease-paint thick upon him—a ghosty figure with great dark eyes staring out of white face and a general appearance of being tortured. He gave to me an extraordinary impression of being too highly bred, something like that of a show Pekinese, of a delicate hypersensitiveness too agonizing for this world of rough and tumble, as of a body in which the nerves and arteries have been exposed.

There was a certain grave courtesy which would not be denied, even in that moment of preparation for the stage, something that was the man himself. For there was something curiously fine about the Martin Harvey of whom the world was beginning to talk.

And so . . . enter Madame!

Within a short two decades, woman has leaped the centuries! has leaped them to be always, however, the same essential elusive quintessence. In dress, in speech, in thought, in everything but in acting, has woman made progress. For the leading actresses of to-day are, nearly all, but pale shadows of their mothers and grandmothers.

"Leading ladies" like Mrs. Beerbohm Tree, were it is true, to a degree players of single parts; but even the single achievement was convincing. Of how many moderns can that be said?

Mrs. Tree once astounded me by her performance of Ophelia—an impressive piece of mad tragedy. It was at once her great part and her great triumph and if she had never played another, she would have justified her stage existence.

A piece in which I recall her, not because of any especial excellence in her acting, but because certain plays for no particular reason will remain for ever in the memory, was that ghastly little French piece at Wyndham's: "Au

Téléphone," with her tragic telephoning to her husband, miles away in the great city, from her lonely country house, and then, as her murderers break in, her despairing cry as the telephone falls from her hand, with her husband powerless at the other end of the line. Charles Warner was, I think, the husband—and a fine piece of forceful acting it was by a great melodramatist.

A little later, Lena Ashwell broke through to the London imagination in a shop play by Cicely Hamilton at His Majesty's, if I remember aright. The world was beginning then to talk about a queer phenomenon, hitherto regarded as impurely Continental, called Socialism, and the basis of this play was the " living-in " system with plenty of propaganda in it.

In her acting in the " Madame X " of Alexandre Bisson at the old Globe, some twenty years ago, Miss Ashwell proved herself to be one of the few great tragediennes of the English stage. She had the capacity that night of investing the most ordinary acts of life with significance.

This picture of a degraded woman, returning to blackmail her husband and the son whom she loves, under the influence of her latest master and the death of the mother from shock and misery in her son's arms, was the triumph of a first-rate art in a second-rate play.

With her fine restraint in tragedy, it seems to me, rightly or wrongly, that Lena Ashwell never reached the eminence of which she was capable. But what younger tragedienne of to-day upon the English stage, save Sybil Thorndike and Cathleen Nesbitt, is comparable to her ?

We took our Pinero terribly seriously in the nineties and early nineteen-hundreds. What sensations were not " Iris " and " Letty " and " The Second Mrs. Tanqueray " and " The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith " ? " Iris " with Fay Davis in the name part and Oscar Asche as Maldonado at the

Garrick, I know impressed my youthful mind more than any play I saw before or have seen since, really wrung my heart-strings with the cold steady brutality that lies behind life. Yet I wonder would it wring them to-day? For these plays were "period-plays."

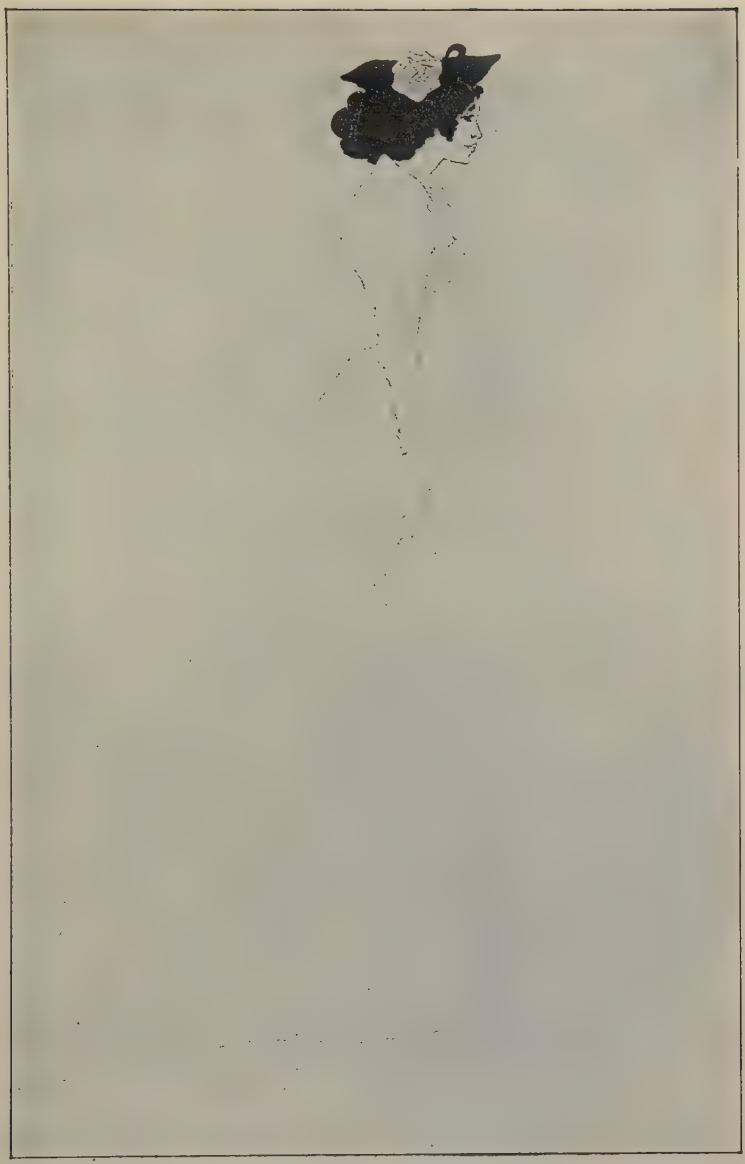
All this brings up other and more serious questions lying outside the scope of such a book as this. How far is the appeal of the actor's art dependent upon the "period" in which he lives? When I remember Sarah Bernhardt of a quarter of a century ago as she appeared one London afternoon in "La Dame aux Camélias" I remember how ridiculously exaggerated, almost artificial, her acting seemed. But I also know that this really great creature needed the understanding of the French mind—the French atmosphere She also, in a sense, needed her "period."

And that is why all judgments of actors and actresses of the past must be to greater or less extent, time-bound. We knew then whether we liked them or not. It is not possible for us to convey their intangibilities across the space of a quarter of a century, because it is not possible to convey their "period." We can only try—we are nearly sure to fail.

One actress and one actress alone was made for the last two above-mentioned plays of Arthur Wing Pinero—Mrs. "Pat" Campbell.

No pen can hope to show to the twentieth century the Mrs. Patrick Campbell of the 'nineties. This adorable creature had everything . . . everything. No actress that I have seen since, or in any country, has had the same.

She had graciousness and grace—two different things. She had a voice like the chiming of temple bells and a catch in the throat like the glug-glug of nightingales on June nights. She had a rich dark beauty that troubled you



Portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, by Aubrey Beardsley

But above all, she had that supreme quality of which I have already written—the only thing that matters in woman or actress—the quality of being unforgettable.

Never an audience yet sat before Mrs. Pat that did not fall in love with her—not as actress but as woman. To look at her was to love her—not necessarily for any goodness innate, but for her strange, all-compelling beauty. And hers was a spiritual beauty.

Listening to her and looking at her as she played, she would sometimes conjure up for me one of the inhabitants of that No-Man's-Land who love, not as mortals, but as fairies love, in it, something merciless, un-human.

Things dropped from her, unexpected, unbeknownst, as from some goddess. Unconscious in her humour as in her beauty, Mrs. Pat could " say things " that left the recipient sorry for himself and sorry for ever—perhaps not only in the land of " make-believe." Her very kindness of heart, her very quality of unpremeditation, made her shafts all the more deadly.

It must have been on the turn of the century that I first saw her. It was in Pinero's " The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," and to that part she managed to give something that the bare words never had. There was always the suggestion of tragedy in Mrs. Pat. She could have conveyed tragedy in any comedy. She could have turned and sometimes did turn blatant melodrama into fine stuff. She made common words into living things in the alchemy of her voice. And if her speeches were golden, her silences were of silver.

She had a way of leaning forward sacramentally, with the oval of her face resting in the hollow of her hand as it had been a chalice. She had a sudden, quick way of walking and of turning her dark head. She made " the woman with a past " so stimulating that I believe half of us, worshipping, came to think that the most desirable wife in the world

would be such a woman—and at once went out from the theatre to look for her.

I saw her a generation afterwards in Shaw's "Pygmalion" and heard her speak the line which on that memorable first night of long ago made London shiver: "Not —— likely!" with the immortal adverb inserted. I saw her, I say, and I loved to see her—but it was twenty years after, and I almost wished the most adorable woman untouched, however gently, by time.

We should never return to old sweethearts.

XXI

BEERBOHM TREE AND " HER MAJESTY'S "

THE " great nights " of long ago in the theatre have dissolved into thin air, " and like this insubstantial pageant faded, left not a rack behind." The kings of twenty years ago are dead. Are there none to take their places ?

A little twenty years ago, and the mummery-flummery of revue was unknown. Jazz had not yet begun to shake its tawdry rags in our faces and the rag-time drummer had not begun his idiotizing beat. England had not been Americanized, although William Gilette in " Sherlock Holmes " at the Vaudeville in the Strand, with an eager, ingenuous Billy the page, a certain Master Charles Chaplin (Charlie's first part on any stage) had come as a single spy from the other side—solitary forerunner of the battalions to follow. Beerbohm Tree in " the legitimate " had also magnificently attempted the part of Count d'Orsay in the American, Clyde Fitch's " Last of the Dandies," taking that of Zakkuri in David Belasco's " Darling of the Gods," whilst in the No-Man's-Land of black face, the nigger minstrel at least was as much part of the British Constitution as of " these United States."

It seemed not so very long before that the gilded genius of Oscar Wilde had dominated London's imagination and London's theatres. " Dominated," I said. He still dominates. He still haunts our memories as I do not doubt his shade haunts Regent Street and Piccadilly

Mr. Charles Wyndham's middle-aged youth was being

quietly effective in loose, well-cut tweeds in the West End, what time he discoursed in gentlemanly fashion with his friend Miss Mary Moore. Charlie Hawtrey, "*Dear* old Charlie," was flapping indolently and equally effectively at the Criterion or the Apollo or the Prince of Wales. Henry Irving was still the Grand Old Man of the boards, and, like "Charley's Aunt," then setting London a-roar, could without disrespect be said to be "still running." And the most earnest *farceur* on earth, George Bernard Shaw, was calling sardonically to the elect, who chortled delightedly.

The productions of Shakespeare at Her Majesty's in these days were not "performances"—they were religious ceremonies. I will even say that Her Majesty's to tens of thousands was holy ground and His Majesty Beerbohm Tree, a sandy-haired, sandy-voiced god to be worshipped afar off. (No son or daughter of man, in the then unknown American language, had ever been known to "get fresh" with Tree when he received his homage at the fall of the curtain on a first night.)

I cannot better convey the "awfulness" of Her Majesty's than by quoting from the programme, with a crown and headings in royal crimson:

> Mr. Tree does not permit fees to be received by any attendant. . . .
>
> Special Matinée Teas are served in the Foyer of the Theatre . . . consisting of freshly made Tea, cut Bread and Butter and Cake, Price 6d. per person inclusive.

"Mr." Tree always spoke in capitals.

The powdered flunkeys with the balustrade calves and, as I remember, in royal red. The oil paintings, like Tree himself, larger than life. The staircases. The carefully relegated grades and prices of seats. Her Majesty's had the taste of the real thing, and not one of us who paid our 4s., 3s., or 2s., the three degrees of Upper Circle, but felt regal, or

Oscar Wilde. As Limned by Max Beerbohm

at least as " select " as any stall-holder in any other theatre.

The upper circles had, each, their several degrees of flavour. Earnest young teachers; slightly impecunious virgins in the thirties and forties; city clerks with stage aspirations. The Fabian socialist, a young man with long dark hair and midnight oil in his face, frightfully earnest but nonchalant. Bevies of the first of the flappers, just beginning to " flap " and all secretly in love with Gerald Lawrence or Basil Gill—never with Tree, for no one ever dared to love *him*. " Adore " him—yes; " love " him—no.

Everything at " Her Majesty's " was " done decently and in order," as the prayer-book has it. The free programmes themselves were handed around like prayer-books. The respectable " Mr." always stood in the programme before the name of each actor, whilst the simple words " Mr. Tree " conveyed something ineffable, for Beerbohm Tree never quite recovered from his knighthood. There was a dignity and a sufficiency about the plain " Mr." which a peerage could not have given. " Neat but not gaudy "—the expression of the day.

Even the " Box Office (Mr. Watts) " had something *ex cathedra* about it, as had the pronouncement: " A complete Diary of the full performances can be obtained . . . upon application at the Box Office." Not a " list," mark you, but a " diary."

I remember my first meeting with Herbert Beerbohm Tree, as a boy and perhaps rising my sixteenth year, in the City, at a time when Tree, who must have been still in the thirties, was already famous.

He stood that midsummer evening outside the half-door that was the bar to the big city financier with whom I was working out my destiny, as Lucifer might have stood at the bar of heaven. A slenderly, tall, imposing figure, he was, with top hat inviolate, a frock coat close fitting above but

with a graceful flow beneath, a generous double tie of black satin with a splendid pearl or emerald (I cannot remember which), and a knobbed malacca held sloping outwards, like a sceptre, from the striped unmentionables.

The delicate hands were clothed in grey lavender, as I remember. His " Show me in, boy ! "—whether words or merely gesture I cannot now say, for Beerbohm Tree talked with his hands—is to be recalled but not to be reproduced. It was mediæval, superb.

There was something indescribably sandy about Tree. His face always reminded me of that of " Freckled Fitz "—Bob Fitzsimmons, the fighter, although I cannot swear to the freckles. His legs were long, slender pediments, but for their proper displayment they needed trousers, for when unveiled, so to speak, these sacred members were spindly, and despite their straightness, occultly they always suggested knock-knees. They were, however, well set into the small-hipped torso, but I will defy anybody to describe his features, which were nondescript. It was " the altogether " of the man that was so imposing.

Only once did I see this extremely impressive creature look ridiculous. It was one night at Her Majesty's as Ulysses. Tree with that hollow-voiced impressiveness declaiming heroically in a pair of painfully thin shanks, only too poorly covered by a vicarious garment which might have been a toga but which looked remarkably like a nightshirt (I am convinced that Mr. Tree never wore pyjamas), was a sight for the gods, although even at that I am convinced that dozens of flappers in the circles still adored him : their king could do no wrong. But, so far as I remember, the " gods " of whom I was one, did not laugh, Need I say more ?

Neither of the two greatest actors of that time, Tree and Irving, had any voice to speak of. Tree's voice was hollow and, like the man himself, sandy. As for Irving's, it grated

at times like the hinges of a gate creaking in the wind. Neither voice nor physique have, it seems to me, anything to do with the most interesting thing in the world—personality. It is something outside the physical.

He had a regal way of command that, like his legs, was not to be mistaken, but, despite his mannerisms, he was a remarkable actor, perhaps the greatest versatile actor of the English stage of our day.

All the Beerbohm brothers, I fancy, had something of the regal touch. Julius, to whom I often spoke, a fair-moustached, blue-eyed and very silent man, who was "something in the City," was a veritable "la-di-da," who pulled his heavy yellow moustache with sweeping nonchalance and who smoked his cigarette with a certain languid "off with his head," air. Max, writer and cartoonist, I never knew, but I do not doubt he found his brothers excellent "copy."

It comes to me, as I write, that, with a solitary exception, that of Fagin the Jew, I never saw Tree without this regal touch on any of the "great nights" in which I remember him.

A "character" actor, as I think, quite alone in his day, his Fagin in "Oliver Twist" was a masterpiece of knowing old gentledom. Who that saw him that first night reprove the irrepressible Charley Bates with the nozzle of the bellows with which he was blowing the fire, can ever forget it and the immense slyness of accent, or that early "character" triumph of Constance Collier as Nancy? In "David Copperfield" he was perhaps less happy. In that play, Tree took two parts—those of Mr. Micawber and Dan'l Peggotty. The David Copperfield was Owen Nares, an attractive boy, Charles Quartermaine was Uriah Heap.

I have some happy memories of Tree "first nights," as other nights, at the old Her Majesty's, now "His Majesty's."

The nights of " The Eternal City " of Hall Caine ; of " The Darling of the Gods " and " The Last of the Dandies," and the memorable " Trilby " with Tree as Svengali (perhaps his greatest " character " part), are grouped in my mind after the lapse of nearly a quarter of a century.

Which one of us will forget the first scene in " The Darling of the Gods " (a Japanese play) with its glimpse of " The God in the Mountain " and its last in the heavens above : " The First Celestial Heaven (in the clouds)," for Tree had the soaring mind ? Lena Ashwell was Yo-San, daughter of the Prince of Tosan, and Tree of course the devilish Minister of State.

As psychological study, Tree as Svengali in " Trilby " made the first time I saw him in this part an impression unforgettably weird.

He was the only actor I ever saw who did not " act " but who sometimes really " was " his parts. That was specially true of the part of Svengali, and that was the reason for his overpowering quality of " suggestion."

In du Maurier's piece, the suggestion of hypnotic power over Trilby was always real and unforced. When Trilby sang, it was Tree singing inside her. How indescribably he suggested the erosion of the forces of the will doing their work inside the shell of the body ! Nor do I doubt that Beerbohm Tree secretly rejoiced in the heavy astrakhan collar, the braided overcoat, the shining silk hat, and the long hair with his suggestion of high finance. It gave to him the feeling of the thing that in private he worshipped—power.

I have very distinct recollection one other night of the idea of power which Tree the man, as apart from Tree the actor, gave to me.

It was in " The Eternal City," in which the splendid Constance Collier acted with him, and it must have been

Constance Collier as Nancy in "Oliver Twist" at His Majesty's

perhaps twenty years ago. There was about Tree that night, the suggestion of a man who had been taken up into a high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—and who had not rejected it. The hollow-toned contempt of Tree as he spoke the words: *Vox populi, vox Dei,* was no piece of acting—it was a cry from the heart.

The great actor would, I imagine, have found himself less and less comfortable in this " democratic " age.

Never did man have to " act " less than Beerbohm Tree in " The Last of the Dandies," which came about the same time as " The Darling of the Gods "—Tree as Count d'Orsay preening it on that night of a splendour to-day unknown when fine dress has fallen into plus-fours and scratchy frocks.

Can you see him, high and slender, as he strides out on to the stage of His Majesty's, curled hair, side whiskers, superb hat and varnished boots ? Can you see again his white stock, white waistcoat with heavy gold chain running across his swelling breast and under the left armpit, voluminous black cloak, tight strapped trousers and tasselled cane held in small white kid-gloved hand ?

Here indeed was the real Tree, as he stood there under the high lights, the voluminous black cloak lined with shining silk. The faultless trousers tightly strapped over the tiny varnished boots. The exquisite white-gloved hands. The curly-brimmed hat. The long cane. The prodigious stock. How Tree would have loved to have commandeered down Piccadilly just like that !

XXII

"TWELFTH NIGHT"

In the remembrance of all playgoers I believe there remains enshrined some particular piece which for them has a fragrance of its own. Sometimes it comes back to them ghostlike down the winding corridors of memory, a happy vision—a secret love out of the past, to haunt.

Is it that I am the victim of fond imagining when I say that I believe if the "secret love" of a generous proportion of the playgoers of a quarter of a century ago could be discovered, it would be found to be "Twelfth Night" as Beerbohm Tree produced it at Her Majesty's?

On an evening of 1901, I was to see my first real performance in any theatre—that of "Twelfth Night," produced upon February the fifth of that year, for I was of Puritan upbringing and, like thousands of children of that age, had been taught to regard the theatre as the antechamber to the pit and the use of that word to describe a certain part of the auditorium as no accident. (It is true that I except one or two shameful and shamefaced visits as a child, accompanied by shamefaced elders, or, in one or two dreadful cases, alone, and suffering the tortures of the fore-damned.) The temple of my initiation was "Her Majesty's," whose name was soon to be changed to "*His* Majesty's."

I use the words "temple" and "initiation" after due weighing. There was always a ritual music for "Twelfth Night," a ritual that never varied. We opened with

Weber's " Oberon " in order to bring ourselves into the proper frame of mind. After the first act, we had Lardelli's " Enfantine." And which one of us does not recall with a little pull at the heartstrings the airy, gentle lift of the music of the Entr'acte, Sullivan's " Graceful Dances," and the " English Dances " of Cowan with that quaint processional upon Malvolio's first appearance ?

" If music be the food of love, play on " ; the opening line of Shakespeare's immortal whimsy, were the first words I ever remember hearing in a theatre, spoken at this production by Robert Taber—the handsome young actor so soon to pass from any stage. The Viola was Lily Brayton—what a delectable little thing she was and what a perfect foil she was one day to be for the giant, Oscar Asche, whom she married ! Maud Jefferies was Olivia, Lionel Brough, one of *the* Broughs, Sir Toby Belch, and the evergreen Norman Forbes was Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Beerbohm Tree was, of course, Malvolio.

The ecstasy of that night is still with me. For there were the gods and goddesses of another world walking and talking before me.

There are but two ways it seems to me in which a play can be presented on the stage—and they are direct opposites. Either the plain back cloths and hanging Grecian lines of a Gordon Craig, or the " straight " presentation of Tree, elaborately simple and colourful, the chief creator of which at " Her Majesty's " was Joseph Harker.

Tree's Elizabethan gardens, with the scent of the lavender fairly wafting at you ; their prim-clipped yew-hedges ; and their lawns of green velvet—all were the eye's delight. Always, when the curtain lifted, there passed through the auditorium the sigh of souls satisfied. More than once have I seen the simple souls of a bygone day sit silent, the tears standing in their eyes, as they gazed enwrapt upon the

" Terrace of Olivia's House " or " Olivia's Garden," before a word had been uttered by the players, finding that strange familiar feeling of scenes revisited — magic gardens in which, long centuries before, they must have wandered.

When next I saw " Twelfth Night," it was on the evening of June 17th, 1904, a Friday as I remember and in the same theatre. Hundreds of men and women, middle-aged to-day, living in London can give you the exact date and hour they first saw " Twelfth Night " with Tree as Malvolio. How many playgoers of to-day will carry the hours and times when first they saw some revue or " transient " of our day ? But never mind.

Look at the names, some of the owners still with us.

Oscar Asche as Antonio. J. Fisher White, that fine actor and gentleman, as the sea captain. William Haviland as the jester. Lionel Brough and Norman Forbes in their 1901 parts.

Constance Collier, who had been discovered by Tree and who was regarded as the handsomest woman in England (I am not sure that she is not still that) was the Countess Olivia.

The Eastern cameo of the young actress, strangely remote but friendly, always behind the magnificent sheer of nose and full velvet eye the suggestion of tragedy, stands out the more plainly for the passing of the years. I do not think Constance Collier could ever be termed a " great " actress—she was too monumental and too " cold " for that. But she had the quality of being unforgettable—the only quality that matters in an actress—perhaps in any woman.

I did not see her for some years. It was the night of the fight for the World's Middle-Weight Championship at the Palladium between Billy Papke and Jim Sullivan, and I stood with a former welter-weight champion and a bevy

Beerbohm Tree as Malvolio, in "Twelfth Night" at Her Majesty's

of other gentlemen with cauliflower ears in the gangway of the stage entrance, waiting for the doors to open.

One of the fighting men had used a foul expression (he was one of the baser sort), when a quick silence fell upon the group. It was as though these rough souls had been touched by the finger of God. But it was actually Constance Collier.

The actress, still with the haunting beauty of other days, was coming along the gangway, perhaps to fetch some " property " she had left behind, for I think she was "showing " at the Palladium at that time, when even first-class actresses were beginning to take a step till then unthinkable, and had descended to variety. She moved, as always, like a queen coming to her own, with that something untouchable, unapproachable, which it seemed to me marked her out from other actresses.

The fighting men stared at her dumbly, as I have seen so many do. But not a man there knew who she was or of the glories departed. I worshipped silently . . . she passed on.

But there had come back to me a theatre of memory, one night of June, with the lights burning low in the kitchen of Olivia's house and Courtice Pounds, singing to his lute : *O Mistress Mine, where are you roaming ?* Courtice, rotund and luscious-voiced, surely a vessel formed for sweet music plucking the strings to troll :

What is love ? 'tis not hereafter ;
Present mirth hath present laughter ;
What's to come is still unsure :
In delay there lies no plenty ;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

How many of us who listened to him that night of June, have not found this out !

Listening to him seven years after are Arthur Bourchier

who is Sir Toby, and Norman Forbes, who is Sir Andrew, for it is the 1911 revival of "Twelfth Night." Arthur Bourchier lacked perhaps the full fruitiness as of old port of Lionel Brough, who had made his last bow some time before and, as I think, almost on the heels of his appearance as Sir Toby Belch at a previous production. And what a swash-buckling old roysterer Lionel could be!

It is into the middle of a "catch" sung most outrageously by the Clown, Sir Toby and the Welsh Knight, the last with his pale hair hanging over his pale face "like flax on a distaff," that Malvolio, a pasty-faced Malvolio in long white nightshirt, comes to reprove them for their most untuneful caterwauling: "Do ye make an alehouse of my lady's house, that ye squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice?"

Courtice, a mellower and riper edition, I was to see many years afterwards in "The Duchess of Dantzig," singing "Papillon" in a Shaftesbury Avenue theatre. Greatest of "Twelfth Night" clowns, he had a tenor of exquisite *timbre*, with a head note that haunts me down the years.

A friend of his once told me that upon the greater occasions Courtice always ordered a magnum of champagne for his friends and himself. There was just that something generous and fruity of a champagne magnum in his voice, for there was a sort of rotund satisfying plumpness about Courtice Pounds that is not to be described.

His "Come away, come away, Death" was no grisly spectre but rather that of a Death, gently loving, calling to all who suffered from love unrequited and unbearable, offering sweet assuagement, and many a maiden who listened, crossed in love, sighed with the singer's hollow echoing to wish that death, gentle death, could come for her.

But away with melancholy! and let us contemplate Malvolio.

And what a Malvolio! Tree *was* Malvolio, although as one suspects, he sometimes thought he was Ulysses or Richard II, or that disastrous venture, Hamlet—perhaps his secret stage love.

Malvolio ruffed and starched, strutting his little day between the primly ordered walks of an Elizabethan garden with peacock yews, preceded by three snub-nosed pages, cherubic fool-faced youths with hair brushed well forward over the ears like horns, dressed precisely alike and carrying, snout in air, the one a cushion, the second a cushion and the third a cushion. All for the comfort and glory of the great man, Malvolio, with staff of office and quizzing glass and short velvet cloak.

Malvolio reading the trick letter of Maria the waiting-maid, and that buxom joker with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew watching from behind a neighbouring hedge. Malvolio, with that gesture of condescending thanks to the Almighty for the Countess's imagined favours, as he lifts his high feathered hat and looking heavenward says, shortly: "Jove, I thank thee."

And then Malvolio in the last stage, lean, smiling, cross-gartered, as he tumbles into disillusionment and ruin irretrievable.

Beerbohm Tree that night surpassed even himself. He made us laugh and cry together—the supreme test of the actor.

Which one of us, with that holy earthy feeling still clinging, could visit His Majesty's in the days of its relegation to musical comedy and leg-show revue? Since the passing of Tree, I have never entered the hallowed portals, nor do I believe I shall have the heart to do so again.

I can see the ghost of Beerbohm Tree, superbly unaware, magnificently tall, in the cape and white gloves of a d'Orsay, standing wistfully at the back of the circle, at last to cover

its hollow eye sockets with skeleton hands and wail for the things that were and are no more.

The lights are very low now. Once more it is " Twelfth Night " and Constance Collier queens it to Courtice's clowning.

I am listening again to the doleful quips of Sir Andrew Aguecheek. I am looking at Malvolio as he toys with his long curling beard to carry his ruff like a pinchbeck prince, as he reads his letter between the prim yew hedges, from behind which comes the jocund ribaldry of Sir Toby Belch and the merry laugh of Maria the waiting-maid. And out of the distance there comes the song of the Clown as he trolls :

A great while ago the world began,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day. . .

XXIII

A CANTERBURY TALE

THERE was a London music-hall in which the history of Old Cockaigne, originally spelled Cockayne, was both made and recorded over a long series of years. In all great cities, there are vortexes of life which seem to gather to themselves the spirit of their time and in which history is set down so that he who runs in the years to come may also read.

In London, the House of Commons; the Queen's Hall; the old Lyceum theatre; "Wonderland"; and perhaps half a dozen other centres of human life and thought are the recording machines of their time. But none of them, in the days to come, will prove more tenderly reminiscent than the old Canterbury music-hall in the Westminster Bridge Road just over the river.

The Canterbury was the boundary-line between the daddy of the modern music-hall, in which a chairman officiated, and the Palace of Varieties of to-day. For generations of Londoners, it spelt entertainment, and, to an extent, education—education in humanities of which Oxford never dreamed. I can only say for myself that in a time when I was alone in London and friendless, I would have been the poorer in mind and spirit had I not had the friendly little gilded cage over the river to which to fly when the grey world pressed too hardly upon me.

A humble shilling or two unlocked for me as for others a palace of Aladdin, into which we could retreat from the realities. There was a warmth lighted by a gaiety that was

not only the glitter of gilt, a sparkle that held in it the zest of life, about the dear old Canterbury which made it a home from home. And if there be those who would place upon its rather broad humour the tag of Puritan disapproval, I can only say that, in all humility, I submit more joy and real good was radiated from that blessed little hall than from half a dozen Exeters of that ilk. But I wish here in these pages to be kindly and forgiving as I hope one day to be forgiven—and so I say no more.

The outside alone warmed you up with its gay pictures. Pictures of soubrettes, straight-limbed, small-footed, and altogether charmful, draped as the soubrette of that day always was in a sort of silk sash that hung down from one shoulder and was looped around the egg-glass waist to fall gracefully over one of the bounteous hips, with a big baby bow to complete. In the hand, a wand crusted with diamonds. Surmounting the whole the HAT.

By her side would be the Strong Man act, showing Mr. Sandow or Mr. Hackenschmidt, or any of the other Strong Men of the period, lifting stallions or grand pianos with a dozen out-size gents sitting upon the lid or other airy trifles.

Then there would be the comedian with a nose like a railway danger signal, impossible boots, and hair parted in the middle, or bald as an egg. There would be tumblers—regular Turks; thought-reading ladies with mesmeric eyes; and a holy wonder of a skirt dancer with feet and frills waving to blazes to point the path to the pit.

Then through that grotto-like approach, dim and mysterious, which acted as the thick bread and butter that the child of that unspoiled day always got before the cake. Through that grey approach into the darlingest hall in London, with the gilt thick upon it, glowering in dull gold under the dimmed lights.

You could get a seat in the front stalls for a ridiculous sum—not much more than half a dollar I think. Here you had the unspeakable advantage of having under your nose the orchestra with more ginger to the length of bow or trumpet nozzle than any orchestra in London.

What a zip that old orchestra had! It was a thin, thin line, with the drummer packed into a very light corner, but what smash and dash and crash!

Per aspera ad astra. Above our heads, winding its way to the stars is a sort of Jacob's Ladder upon which we are to see a gentleman ride upon a big varnished ball roofward, and then, having done so, to our unspeakable gratification, ride it down again. In that ladder, there was something aspiring, something of the stars that are to twinkle on the quite respectable stage—a pretty generous affair for so small a place. For the Canterbury always seemed very high and columnar, and I think it was the first theatre in London to have a sliding roof to cool our heated imaginings. The mystery of feeling upon the face the plash of cool raindrops inside that hotted pleasure house!

High up, out of reach, at the end of Jacob's Ladder, the Canterbury "gods," some of whom have got in for thruppence or fourpence I think, or even "on the nod," hang their big, interrogative noses—there is an alarming proportion of Jewish gents among them—and expectorate indifferently orange peel, oaths and caustic remarks down upon the stallites, leading to sullen and strange upheavals in which a chucker-out swooping down from above, like the Assyrians in the ballad, figures. It was always gratifying to hear that sudden eruption, to catch the tense struggle of strong men locked in war, with all the others trying to look as virtuous as possible—if you could see 'em, but you can't. Then the stormy upward trail to the swing doors, the crash of those doors, and the bumpety-bump-bump

down the long stairs that led to extinction and the street.

You got value for your money at the old Canterbury.

It is still not eight of the clock when that gingery orchestra file in. Up goes the conductor's bâton and with it the lights, turning the dull gold of our cave into fairyland glitter, and we are off!

To-night is a special night of amateur audition to be followed by the professional turns, in which the aspirant to the perilous Parnassus of "Variety," as his hearers, is to be tried out. The Canterbury audience is good-natured and good-humoured. But the Canterbury audience is an audience of artists who "know wot's wot," and who to the insufficient tyro are as cold-blooded tigers.

The first turn has a pathos which would make the fortune of the aspirant if she could do it on purpose and not in spite of herself. She is a hungry looking woman, and she must be thirty-five if she's a day in a time when the woman of thirty-five was regarded as middle-aged and looked it.

She comes with white face out from the wings, and her "line," it appears, is serio-comic, only that unfortunately it is neither serious nor comic. For her great moment, she has, God knows in what hole and corner of London-over-the-river, given birth to a low V-shaped bodice of some pink muslin, cut dangerously low, with, underneath, a flowing bell-bottomed skirt of puce-pink that has obviously been turned. On her skinny arms she wears long white cotton gloves which keep getting in her way whilst she sings. Upon her head is the usual garden of roses, which she has tied saucily under one ear by a black velvet ribbon. She hopes she looks naughty—but it is the hat that is naughty, not the woman.

She has walked on in dead silence, for in the old Canterbury it was always etiquette to give the newcomer a "charnce."

Hackenschmidt, at the Time He Came Out of Russia

But there never was great stage star yet who would not have wilted a little in that silence. And our serio-comic wilts.

She makes little galvanic gestures with the elbows and those awful gloves as she sings her first verse in a wee small voice, and her face, unpainted, becomes whiter and whiter, whilst still that awful silence persists, to leave her alone in the middle of the great stage as a lost soul before the Bar, with the Unseen Witnesses ranged about.

" Guilty ? " or " Not Guilty ? " For the middle verdict of " Not Proven " in the Canterbury was not.

As she begins her second spasm, and a spasm it is, in a still smaller voice, there is a tiny hiss. Such a tiny hiss—like the escape of a thin line of steam.

She turns her tortured eyes a little upwards in appeal . . . and then the place has become a cage of rattlesnakes, for there is a shrilling tempest of hisses, cat-calls, cries to " tike 'er aht of it ! " and then, upon her moment, there descends inevitably that curtain which is the curtain of fate.

For thus were all unpopular turns curtained at these " trials."

Found guilty, I have seen the curtain fall upon the head of the devoted aspirant, who blind and deaf and dumb to the cat-calls, has plunged desperately on, knowing it to be his first and last chance of stardom. I have seen the desperate wretch fight with that shroud of doom as it fell, even spring in front of it, to carry on his unavailing appeal to a den of vipers.

Not so our next turn, which is one after the Canterbury's fickle heart.

A lady and gentleman, excessively genteel, the male in borrowed evening dress and the lady in a dead black which is the Plimsoll mark of respectability and which gives to her a widowed look that renders the performance to follow all the more poignant, come on to the stage. They are, I think

supposed to be, and they may be, amateurs, but to me, looking upon them from the front, it seems that somewhere or somehow they have caught the art incommunicable—the art of facing an audience.

They open with a sticky sentimental bit, in which the gent tickles rather than plays the piano. He has a pair of beautiful short side-whiskers, has the gent, a pair of shrewd dark eyes and an acquisitive nose, and he gauges his audience to the flicker of an eyelash.

It is a " winner." The old touch. Mother and home and the prodigal daughter. Never known to lose. Then the *chef d'œuvre.*

The gentleman has thrown discretion to the winds and his good lady follows him. With a nod to the conductor, he has abandoned his seat at the piano and with an agility most surprising has sprung upon that long-suffering instrument, what time he agitates the coat tails of his evening coat like the tail of a big bad bold tom-cat, what time he howls from his vantage point. The lady, who howls with him genteelly, but still " howls," has as befits the inferior animal, taken up a crouching position upon the lower level of the stage itself. The drum bangs, the fiddles wail ; the clarionettes shriek ; and the lady and gentleman howl in chorus—the Cats' Chorus—and so bring down the house.

Whistles, cat-calls but cat-calls hilarious, not censorious, *encores* frantic, and so history and success have been made in one molten moment in the crucible of the old Canterbury.

What nights those in which we blessed amateur and professional, although sometimes we had trial *matinées* in which Spanish inquisitors out for a lark would pay a few pence to howl at the blushing amateur without admixture.

There was a tiddley-pom-pom about the orchestra that alone was worth the money. When the flapstick comedian fell on his " boko," that gory proboscis really did seem to

smash upon the boards like a ripe beet. Everything was excessive at the Canterbury.

When, in a favourite boxing act there, the vulgar cad, for some reason never quite clear, was soundly walloped by the excessively genteel college gent for having insulted an excessively genteel young lady, a barmaid (" ain't a blushing barmaid as good as a blighted countess ? "—Old Canterbury philosophy), it was all so genteel as to leave one wonder that such refinement could persist in face of the shocks of a rude world. When the Strong Man came on, it was with such excessive muscles that it was a wonder he could move at all, and indeed it often seemed to me that these Samsons were so muscle-bound that they might with advantage have been carried on and carried off.

The turns that were mostly favoured at the old music-hall were " strong " turns. I have seen a little comedian five feet high take upon his devoted chest upon the decks of one of H.M. battleships hundreds of shells and cannon-balls of full size. I have seen red-nosed comedians bang each other upon the napper until the very rafters rang again. I have heard sopranos with the " highest ever " note pierce our ear-drums and our souls, to our secret enjoyment.

But of all the Canterbury turns, the one most truly Canterburnian was that of poor John Lawson, in that indescribable piece, " Humanity."

Who will forget John Lawson as for no apparent reason, he sat amidst his oil paintings, ranged around him, carried from hall to hall and for some occult reason, heavily insured, as he sang " Only a Jew ! " Who will forget John Lawson in his velveteen jacket as he made strident appeal to the humanities of his audience, half of them Hebrews like himself ? For the Canterbury was the true Commonwealth of Nations, in an age before Internationalism had been heard of. " Live and let live ! " was its motto. And it always had a soft

spot for Jews, even for Turks and Infidels—for everything but Frenchmen, for even the Canterbury had its inhibitions, sometimes passing strange.

The other typical Canterbury turn was that of G. H. Chirgwin, "The White-eyed Kaffir." Chirgwin clad in skin-tights, tights and man black as Erebus, with the historic white lozenge patch upon one eye. Chirgwin with his greeting to the boys as he walked on with his cigar-box fiddle, Japanese or Zulu or anything you like. Chirgwin with his famous "Blind Boy" played and sung by an artist great in his way and day as Pachmann or Joachim, with the tremble in fiddle and voice, and strong men, as weak women, wiping away surreptitious tears. And then the Chirgwinian post-climax, like a douche of cold water as the black pagan at each appearance more bulbous about the waist line, looks drouthily towards the gods to draw suggestive hand across thirsty mouth and to ejaculate: "Could do wiv a drink!"

Whilst you sipped your stout in the stalls, a drink much affected by the *habitué*, and you sipped it strong and steady from 7.45 until sometimes after midnight, for programmes were programmes in those days of value for money, you watched the performers with a certain critical detachment, unless they were old tried favourites, in which case, with your stout, you swallowed anything they gave you.

One of the rip-roaring turns of the Canterbury was an Irish gentleman of lyrical tendency irrepressible, who at a moment's notice would make up verses by the yard about anything or anybody, often choosing his subjects from the body of the hall, to their exquisite if delighted discomfiture. I know that sometimes in one's perambulations of a later date to that home of variety, accompanied perhaps by a lady, "a real toff" who, much against his will, had over-persuaded her partner to venture into the wilds of the South Side, one would be painfully incommoded by the gentleman on the

stage with a side glance that was not lost upon a single " god " there to where you sat in the stalls, who would begin, what time that miraculous orchestra " hung on " :

There's a smart young toff
With a bit of lace—
They're off, they're off !
And oh ! what a face !
When she gets home
Her ma will scold,
And he'll sneak off,
Now ain't he bold ? . . . etc., etc.

A mordant trifle. Telling and deadly, whatever might be your consciousness of personal innocence. The " gods " howling with joy, for " over the river " there was a sort of " class war " recognized. You grinning and sweating, whilst your fair companion, bending low over her programme, seems set upon studying every individual item in it.

But relief ! The grimly smiling comedian has pounced upon an elderly gentleman with a hydrogen-peroxided lady obviously not his wife, and is letting himself go at *their* expense. But the elderly gent, secure in the fact that he is from Wigan and that nobody knows him, doesn't care a damn, and laughs with the best of them, rather proud of his conquest, who sits by his side, smirking in a sort of golden glory.

We had no morals in the Canterbury. All the same, we had a nice code of conduct. There were things you didn't do and there were things you did do in that home of sweet variety.

You never pinched another gent's drink unless you wanted a thick ear. You never talked to another gent's donah, unless you wanted ditto, and with a courtesy that would have done credit to a duke, you ignored the infrequent swell so as not to make him uncomfortable. If you were a

programme seller, you gave special attention to the West End toff and his fair consort, and you always hissed anybody who interrupted the announcer before a strong man act with a scandalized hush-sh-sh ! You did not " scrouge " in the long and lonely alley-way that led to the hall, especially if the man before you were a toff, and if you sat in the gallery you always refrained from spitting on his head, choosing rather the coarser breed at his side or the gangway, so as to show that you had your manners.

You bought programme, as drink, for the good of the house, if not for your own, and you apologized profusely if you came late when walking upon other gents' toes.

When the chucker-out did it on your pal, you never interfered, but left it as to man and man, recognizing that poor Bill was paid to do his job like anybody else. If your favourite comedian made impolitic reference to tabooed things such as death, you hissed him politely, and murmured " Too bad ! too bad ! " but if an unknown did it, you shouted " Chuck 'im aht, the dir-r-ty tyke ! " and no bones about it.

When old silvery Van Biene came on and played " The Broken Melody " upon his 'cello for the umpteenth time (he did it I believe for over a quarter of a century), you listened virtuously and dropped a silent tear, but of course, you never blubbed in public. All sentimental songs were applauded violently just as it was your bounden duty, whether you thought them funny or not, to laugh loudly at all references to beer, lodgers and mothers-in-law, the three staple commodities of the comics, because these were the three staple commodities of their audiences, perhaps of life.

When a real star descended out of the firmament upon the Canterbury, such as Dan Leno or Chevalier, or Marie Lloyd, you treated him or her as such. If you chaffed, you chaffed discreetly and only to show that you had no flies on you, and were up to snuff. You did this just as you enquired meti-

culously about weights and past performances of the wrestler, strong man, or boxer about to appear, to prove your knowledge of manliness and muscle.

And you certainly never got drunk, at least not to the inconvenient stage. But you were excessively indulgent to the bibulous, always provided he was quiet and hoping to do as you hoped to be done by. If he did not make a dam or sanguinary nuisance of himself, you would even pack him away under your legs in the gallery front, putting your feet upon his recumbent form the while, for there was little room, and letting him snore the rosy hours away. But if he persisted in joining in the choruses in shrill falsetto you helped the chucker-out to remove him—but always gently.

In a word, in the old Canterbury, you were the original Englishman. Very sentimental, very fair, very harsh upon villainy but very indulgent to the more venial sins of love-making. If you sat in the " gods," your ambition was to behave like a gentleman : if you sat in the stalls and were a " gentleman," that rare bird who now has been death-dutied and democratized nearly out of existence, you tried to behave like one of the " gods."

You were, indeed, in the old Canterbury, and without knowing it, writing English History.

XXIV

A MUSICAL MEDLEY

WHAT is it that makes the comedian ?

I use the word in its broader sense of the whole field of singing and dancing, that is of rhythm, from music-hall to musical comedy and from comic opera to the art of the *diseuse.*

How often have we seen two men, with the same gift of the gab, with songs much of the same quality—one of whom will get his audience to reel after him and the other who will just reach that fatal mediocrity of ninety-nine comedians out of a hundred.

When Billy Williams would come out in his velveteen jacket waving his handkerchief to his delighted audience and swinging in figures of eight up and down the stage as he sang, he had his audience in his velvet pocket ere he opened his mouth. He could have got them to follow him in any sort of doggerel—to stagger after him upon any road. And the same was true of R. G. Knowles, the comedian with a weakness for exploration in the wilder places of the earth, when " off," as in white " ducks " he strode up and down the stage warbling " I was afraid to go home in the dark."

The comedian " off " might sometimes be the most common-place, even the coarsest of mortals—but put him before the foot-lights, let the limelight play on him—and metamorphosis ! Now it seems to me that these old stars had this strange quality of metamorphosis, this glamour,

something denied to the modern revue artist, or, for that matter, to much of the "legitimate" itself. Leno had it to a superlative degree; Marie Lloyd had it. Harry Lauder had it. The other two Harrys, Harry Fragson and Harry Champion had it. In another field, that of comic opera, Walter Passmore and Rosina Brandram had it. But the moderns who have it, I can count on my five fingers.

When George Lashwood would come on at the Empire with his rollicking: "But oh! what a difference in the morning," all the audience rollicked after him. When Harry Fragson, the Englishman who made his name in Paris in a foreign tongue, and who was there to die by the hand of his own father, half turned to his audience and looking like some high, pale and extremely intelligent ape, sang his "Whispers of Love," or that indescribable French *chanson-de-guerre* with its raucous note of *revanche*, there was not one there who did not feel, despite that funny pre-war feeling that the Frenchman was a frog, and that the Teuton was a sort of English first cousin, that to die against the hated German would be a soldier's and a hero's death. The Frenchwoman who sometimes sang in English, Yvette Guilbert, the fairy woman and denizen of that No Man's Land, that is between the "legitimate" and the "illegitimate," had it in her own peculiar way, with a lilt and a rhythm that has never had a successor, her audience swinging with her with toe and heart.

All these men and women are strung together in my mind on a sort of daisy chain of songs, going back into the mists of childhood, and, later, more or less conditioned by the musical memories of the big nights of three theatres: Gaiety Nights, Daly's Nights, and the Savoy Nights, with the Gaiety Girls, the Geishas, and Gilbert and Sullivan respectively.

Twenty years before I had ever been in a music-hall,

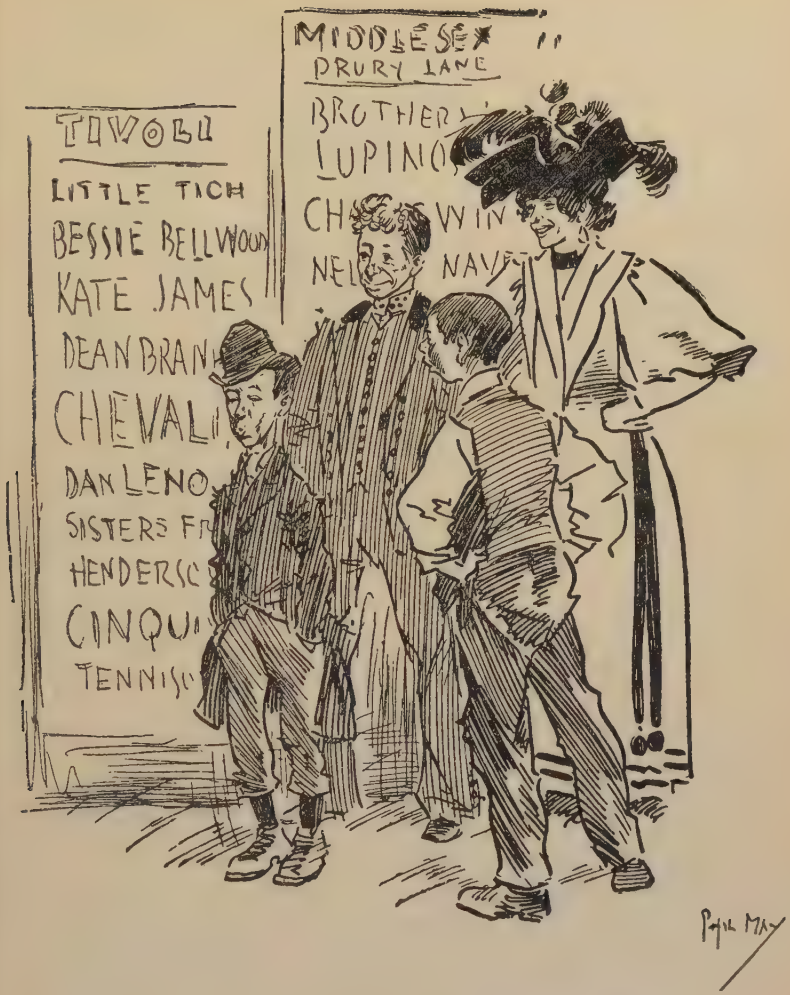
when " Hush ! hush ! hush ! here comes the Bogey Man " was haunting street and stage, I remember a medley verse made up of the bits of the tunes and titles of some of these earlier efforts :

Where did you get that 'at
That collar and that tie ?
Climbing up the golden stairs,
She winked the other eye.
Little Annie Rooney
Sitting in the sun—
Hush here comes the Bogey Man !
Johnny get your gun !

This medley marked for me the earlier period of remembrance. And the mysterious Bogey Man has lost himself in the tumultuous " Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay " of B. Middleton Batchelor, who sold it for £40 and who, I believe, died during the Great War, upon the heels of which swings the cradle song from " Morocco Bound " linked for no earthly reason in this riot of memory with " Wo, mare ! " Then the gorgeous " At Trinity Church I met my doom ! " and the quiet rollicking " There's a tavern in the town," and an altogether inconsequent coster song which had the line " Any ornaments for your firestoves ? " running hand in hand with " The Coster's Beano," with " Little Dolly Daydream " showing her golden curls side by side with the earlier " Oh Honey, my Honey," of, as I think, May Yohë.

Out of this hurly-burly steals the haunting, changing lilt of " In the pale moonlight," perhaps the best song of its kind ever sung on the halls, which opened :

In the pale moonlight,
In the Isle of Wight,
A gay young spark met Flossie
He was gaily dressed
In his Sunday best,
And his hair was smooth and glossy.
Said he : " My papa is a millionaire.
Said she : " My grandmother owns Leicester Square. . ."



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Whistling the Last New Tune

And the sequel:

> And they walked and talked together in the pale moonlight
> Each told the other such a fairy tale.
> He was but a tailor's fitter
> And she a stocking knitter,
> Oh no wonder that the moon turned pale

Here a ribald: "Gaily the troubadour, waltzes round the water-butt, singing the old song: Come, love, with me," in memory, if not in chronological order, sticks in its ribald head between "Two eyes of grey" and the dark orbs of "Juanita," with "Two little girls in blue" peeping shyly behind. Then "The Soldiers in the Park" come crashing down the street, after them, Kipling's "Pay, pay, pay!"

And then the song that breathed hope out of despair, played on a tinkling piano and coming out of a common boarding house facing one of those old-world gardens of a Bloomsbury square, with a freighted golden moon sailing overhead in the London night: "Whisper and I shall hear."

> Winds that blow from the South,
> Come to my listening ear,
> Come from the lips of my loved one,
> Whisper and I shall hear

There is a little break in the memory and then a block of Gaiety songs but the famous "Gaiety Girls" had not come yet. Once more the gigantic Herbert Ashton is declaiming his Toreador song in "The Toreador" at the old Gaiety, with its appeal to blood and glory, supported by the full strength of the chorus, whilst a little man, dressed outrageously in the uniform of a Spanish mayor gives his recipe for mayoral love-making:

> We take a light guitar,
> And a prelude thus, we play-a
> We call her sun and star,
> Not to mention moon, and milky way-a!

She sighs when we implore,
The sequel we decline to say-a—
We are the governor
Of the highly moral city of Valaya

Then a perfectly idiotic thing, of no particular period, which as idiotic things will, has stuck:

There was Brown,
Upside down,
Mopping up the whisky on the floor.
"Booze! booze! booze!" was the fireman's cry,
As they came up bashing in the door.
"Don't let 'em in till it's all mopped up,"
Somebody said to McIntyre.
For we all got blue-blind, paralytic drunk,
When the Old Dun Cow caught fire.

running with it the joyous "Down by 'The Old Bull and Bush.'"

A demure young woman is singing "She was a miller's daughter" at the Gaiety and I think it is Gertie Millar who is warbling archly the "Keep off the grass!" which passed into the vernacular.

Then the appeal melancholic to "Bill Bailey" to come home, and that ripping song of Jack: "All the nice girls love a sailor!" otherwise known as "Ship Ahoy!" and the rather oleaginous "Say au revoir but not good-bye," the French being pronounced democratically "oh revore." "The dear Homeland," passes in stately measure with "Queen of the Earth," and two colleens, "Asthore" and "Eileen Alannah!" hand in hand, move by us into the twilight.

"Hi-tiddley-hi-ti-hi-ti-ti!" rollicks with "Let's have a tiddley round the corner" and "Beer, glorious beer!" three great drinking songs that roar themselves out from the Empire and the Empire's sisters . . . and then there is a pause.

For we have reached the Savoy Nights and the Land of Never-Never of Gilbert and Sullivan, the land that for thousands, with its whimsy songs and its crazy choruses was the land where dreams came true, its melodies the milestones of life in London as it then was lived.

Walter Passmore is tripping it featly and C. H. Workman is singing it neatly every night at the Savoy Pooh Bah pooh-bahs it and Nanki Poo warbles his songs of love to Yum-Yum in "The Mikado." The Duke of Plaza-Toro lets himself go in "The Gondoliers," and Rutland Barrington commands "H.M.S. Pinafore" as only Rutland can. "The Yeomen of the Guard" crash out their choruses on Tower Green to be rivalled only by the chorus of the officers of the Dragoon Guards and that of the Rapturous Maidens of "Patience." And once more in the short summer night we are listening to the apostrophising of the chief of the London Fire Brigade in the immortal:

> Oh! Captain Shaw!
> Type of true love kept under!
> Could thy brigade
> With cold cascade
> Quench my great love, I wonder!

But I cannot go on. There are some things that lie in the depths like drowned mariners. To bring them to the surface is to bring up the dead things of memory to sadden. . . .

And now we are passing from the music-hall (not to mention the hall of music, another thing entirely) to its blood relation, musical comedy, in the distance the long line of Geisha and Gaiety Girls, the East and the West, from the "Gaiety Girl" herself to her tumultuous sisters, the Shop Girl and the Circus Girl, who come billowing on. Behind them, with little shuffling steps flutter San Toy and O Mimosa San of Daly's, the latter partnered by Huntley Wright and

Maurice Farkoa with his famous white lock. Three of our "Gaiety Girls" are Louie Pounds, Marie Studholme and Constance Collier, the last-named strange incursion in that giddy company, her triumphs in Shakespeare with Tree still to come. And what names of the lordly male there are to page our recollections—bell-toned Haydn Coffin and young Seymour Hicks and the nearly immortal George Grossmith, Junr.

Across the boards of Daly's pass Irish Evie Green as "The Country Girl" singing her "Cooee-oo" with her nightingale-notes, behind her, a portly presenced Rutland Barrington giving out in that delicate modulated baritone "The Rajah of Bhong," and in a time when the flavours of Kipling's "Mandalay" were still with us, "Under the Deodar" comes floating on the spiced gale of the Orient.

In the long years after I was to see Leslie Stuart, dignified survival of a vanished age, come out upon the stage of the Alhambra to play the old songs of which he has given so many to musical comedy. But when he played "'Neath the shade of the sheltering palm," it was almost too much for some of us, who remembered the dear dead days. He that opens the doors of memory unlocks a Bluebeard's Cupboard—he may let out an angel, but it may be a skeleton or a ghost that he looses.

XXV

STARS THAT TWINKLED LONG AGO

The lights go up in Leicester Square,
Where old is young and false is fair,
And all the stars are twinkling there—
In Leicester Square.

The lights go up in Leicester Square,
Where all is young and all is rare,
And hearts are caught in woman's hair—
In Leicester Square.

The lights go down in Leicester Square,
Where skins are white and sins are bare,
And broken hearts are walking there—
In Leicester Square.

BEFORE I come more pertinently, perhaps impertinently, to the greater luminaries of the music-hall firmament, the Venuses and Jupiters, sons and daughters of the evening star who sang together for joy—their own and others, I will let memory's phantom horse take the bit in its teeth to run amok amidst the smaller stars and moonlets that shone and twinkled long ago in Leicester Square, although it is not at all sure that even here we may not bump our heads against an occasional Mars or Saturn. I will attempt no ordering, letting those who have stayed in the memory come and go at their own sweet, careless will, and if I have inadvertently omitted some old favourites, I am sure they themselves or their ghosts, as those who loved them, will forgive with that broad forgiving of the "illegitimate."

Arthur Roberts in his prime was perhaps the most "accomplished" comedian of them all. Everything he did had "finish." And he had the quality, a precious quality in a comedian, he drew from his audiences a personal affection.

He had a way of standing with his toes turned well out, encased in long patents fairly dazzling with M. de Guiche's varnish, and with the tips of his fingers set together across his (later) generous corporation and with those wicked eyes glancing sideways from the heavily lined face, every line an eloquence, beneath the wide parting of the ginger hair, that was inexpressibly diverting. Arthur, in many of his rôles, had, I suppose, what Freud would call a sex complex. Arthur as the gay husband; Arthur as the lover rapturous; Arthur as the father of a potential family (I don't think they ever matured)—could bring down the house.

Expressive but not excessive was Arthur Roberts. A touch. A fillip. A glance. And the trick was done.

My amazement was great when twenty years afterwards I was to see him, a venerable old gentleman as he should have been, become, so to speak, reincarnate upon the London stage, at the Oxford. It was not old Arthur but young Artie—saucy, arch, and finished, as ever. I wonder to how many generations of youthful beauty must Arthur have made love? I think that night he even did a *pas de seul* out of sheer *joie de vivre* as he might have expressed it. There was always something French about Arthur.

This was high comedy. Low comedy claimed a little man who used to appear in Fred Karno's "Mumming Birds." The "Mumming Birds" were a representation of the interior of a music hall, and many will remember the inebriated swell with the violently encarmined nose; the bold bad Eton boy in the box, a dead shot with his currant

buns ; and " the Terrible Turkey," Graeco-Roman wrestler, whom the swell challenges.

The way this drunken one could fall head foremost out of his box and hang there like a hairpin without smashing his features or crashing to the floor was to all of us consternation. The way in which he could be gloriously, riotously drunk in such manner as no mortal ever was without giving offence, was flusterbation. And the way in which he fell out of his box and removed his dress coat to display a flannel shirt and a " dickey " which with false cuffs was the everyday standby of the period, was revelation.

" The Terrible Turkey " stands there as terrible Turks will—bulging muscles, fall in back, generous posterior, Hebrew conk, and curling black hair a-bristle with strength. There he stands, to challenge the world. The swell falls out of his box, this time successfully, to approach. They grapple. The swell by a lurch and a hiccup gets behind. The Turkey remains immovable whilst the swell ponders deeply the problem of the recumbent Ottoman. Bright idea ! He bends down and tickles the Turk in the small ribs. The Turkey lets out a convulsive giggle and turns over to fall with his shoulder blades to the mat whilst the swell lurches triumphantly back to his box.

The swell was Charlie Chaplin, King of Drolls.

Another Charles, nobody ever called him " Charlie," was a comedian great in the Lancashire way—Charles Whittle.

Lancashire and Yorkshire for some strange reason have perhaps given more clever comedians to the halls than all the other English counties put together. Of these, Charles Whittle was one of the quietest and cleverest. But he could be joyful.

His joyous " Let's all go down the Strand and have a banana " set us all staggering after him, whilst the pathos of two counties which for all their shrewd intelligence produced

more than their fair share of "naturals" was demonstrated by his "Billy Buggins":

I'm Billy Buggins,
Commonly known as the Juggins,
I'm silly,
Billy,
That's what they all call me . . ."

George Formby was a typical Lancashire comedian; his own life a tragi-comedy. For George Formby at the moment of singing his later songs, himself mortally stricken by consumption and knowing it, with wife and children to keep, each night went on to make people roar with laughter at his wheezing cough whilst he was dying.

All these male comedians, save Arthur Roberts, were of the newer school and as such naturally come first to the remembrance, for memory works backwards like a crab.

Of the real old-fashioned school of red-nose and slapstick, were comics like that pioneer of Scotch comedians, Harry Lorimer, who was dancing donkey's years before the other Scotch Harry, Harry Lauder, was heard of, and whose legs were never quite straight enough for kilts; Mark Sheridan (the real bell-bottomed old-time mummer), who floated miraculously through a quadrille in which he set to invisible partners; and Tom Leamore, also one of the real old-fashioned sort. All these, like that great concertina virtuoso, Dutch Daly, had the rhythmic quality. When Leamore would come on at the old Oxford to sing his:

Oh Rufus! don't spoof us,
Why are you so ginger and so fair?
Oh Rufus! don't spoof us—
We know that you're a hot 'un by the colour of your hair.

our souls and our toes danced with him.

Of the same breed, but with more red and smack was

Harry Champion, avid of boiled beef and carrots, who one day burst like a bomb upon a London audience. Out he came, to slap his boiled beef and carrots down in front of us with a "take it or leave it" air. Harry with his "little red waistcoat," slapping it up and down before us like a matador before bulls, not to infuriate but to titillate: "I *will* have my little red waistcoat I will, I will, I will, I will, I *will!!!*" His boiled beef was quite uncompromising:

Boiled beef and carrots,
Boiled beef and carrots,
Don't be a veg-e-tar-i-an.
Food they give to parrots
Put down the skids.
Bring up your kids,
On boiled beef and carrots.

Harry Champion was "the quick-fire comedian," rattling it out like the patter of a machine-gun. His breakdown at the end was also a slap-bang affair that brought down the house and the stage together Harry—Prince of Slapstick.

George Bastow, long and thin, singing "The Galloping Major" at the Tivoli stood out from the others in his angular, foppish way. Here again was that strange and as it now seems to me, passing quality of magnetism:

With me bumpety, bumpety, bumpety, bump,
As proud as an Indian rajah.
With me bumpety bumpety, bumpety, bump,
See me bestriding my charger—
All the girls declare
That I'm a gay old stager,
Hi! hi! clear the way!
Here comes the galloping major

We rocked to that tune, laughed at the major, but at heart thought him "it." For it was always the quality of the old-time audience, like all music-hall audiences secretly,

intensely conservative, that whilst it laughed at the swell or broken-down duke, it really secretly admired. Perhaps it does so still.

The audience of to-day is a looking-on audience. In those dear dead days, the comedian had his audience with him.

If the lanky T. E. Dunville, the Boneless Wonder, had no charm, he had quaintness, but quaintness of quite another sort. "T.E." was the lankiest serio-comic that ever strode on to the stage with stiffened knees, dressed as a Puritan with lank black hair parted in the middle, soft white Puritan collar and flowing black bow.

To see him bend like a hairpin to slap his proboscis against the boards flat as a beet and to hear the soft smack was a joy. To "hear" him as a preposterous postman delivering letters or as a "bobby" attired in tunic and helmet, two sizes too large, sing "Dinky-do" was an education:

I'm Dinky-do,
And my number's 22,
I'm not the only slop, but I'm a few
(Rum-tum).
And the girls, they declare,
When my uniform they view—
Oh! Dinky-do, Twenty-two
(Rum-tum).

The "rum-tum-tum" was the drum beat that punctuated his jerky clipped sentences. He had a jerky clipped way of breaking off like a cut hose-pipe and looking first to one side and then to the other like a melancholic marionette, to the delight of the listeners, though if he had a fault, it was that he was a little too subtle for his audiences. He had a way of blowing out his cheeks and of drawing them in again that was so funny that you wanted to laugh but could not. And this quality of not laughing when you want to laugh is the final tribute to the quality of the comedian—

only to be superseded by one other—the quality of making you laugh and cry together.

Tragedy clothed T. E. Dunville as a garment. It was not only his undertakerish clothes, but something funereal about the man himself. The body of the man who had helped thousands to live life as it is, was found one day in a Thames lock, "drowned dead."

May you live lightly, "T.E.," wherever you may be, and I am sure for your coming, whether that place is aloft or alow, there will be the more laughter.

But out of that joyous band, many of them ghosts, there steals one comedian who, the white of his eyes turning in the black of his face, as he passes, leaves dusky fragrance in memory land. He looms through the Southern night, in his hand he carries his floppy coon hat like a great mushroom, as he dances on with that springy, lissome gait to make love to his dusky sweetheart under the silver southern moon Whilst the banjos are strumming, you hear him chaunting his immortal "Linger longer Lulu—linger longer Lu!" There is a drawl and sweetness the sadness of which in retrospection seems unbearable—and then he has broken into *such* a whistling—a silver carolling as though all the mocking birds of the southern woods had burst into song

Eugene Stratton, we place you with just three or four others in the more hallowed halls of memory We thank you!

When we leave the harsher glare of the masculine stars and come to the softer effulgence of the gentler sex, a trinity of names at once springs to the recollection, names curiously intertwined. Vesta Tilley, Vesta Victoria and Victoria Monks.

For Victoria Monks I personally never could feel that affection bred by the other Victoria—Vesta to wit. Her

methods as her voice were "American." A trifle raucous in voice and technique, she was. But she was very human.

When she came out in those stiffly foreshortened skirts at the Metropolitan, with plenty of red, and advanced down stage with that queer "Coo-ee" that never failed to win its answer from the "gods," she always reminded me of a husky light-weight advancing upon his adversary. Her "It's Moving Day" and "Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you" got right into the soft tissue of her audiences, the final kick with back to audience finally driving it home.

Victoria Monks knew the music-hall, never going an inch beyond her audience, and giving them that indefinable *camaraderie* which is the open sesame to the heart of the English variety public.

But she lacked "charm," and got her effects by brute force rather than by cajoling subtlety.

Vesta Victoria, on the other hand, always, it seemed to me, carried with her an indefinable air of refinement, whether she was singing "Waiting at the Church" or "Our Lodger is a nice Young Man," two songs that in those days swept London. There was a sort of blonde freshness about her that was not of the halls, and, in a word, you could very easily imagine Vesta to anybody, in any station, a splendid mother or fond wife.

It was at the old Pavilion, in the days when it was sometimes used for heavyweight wrestling, that I saw her come out wrapped in a blanket sort of material, a tiny muff, and a pinched mutton pie hat to match, to sing "Waiting at the Church." But her grotesque convict stockings, her pretentious clothes, and her assumed gawkiness could not hide the real charm of this lovely young woman, who twenty years afterwards and seemingly unchanged, was

after an absence from England, to sing the same song at the Victoria Palace. Again, in her I find that secret of a common humanity with her audience, which is the secret of the music-hall. The music-hall audience is average, rather opaque, and of the commonplace, but it has a fine ear for false values. The *vox populi* may not always be the *vox Dei*, but the heart of the people in this single thing is as the heart of Divinity—omniscient. You cannot fool it.

But another Vesta (how all these names seem to alliterate) the great little Vesta Tilley, now Lady de Frece, had a talent that was as peculiarly her own as that of Marie Lloyd. It would be a shame to make comparison. Both women were great in their own way, and writing of them one can say: "There is one greatness of the sun and another of the stars. . . ."

"Following in Father's Footsteps," the song by which Vesta Tilley will be known as long as the stars twinkle in Leicester Square, was the perfection of male impersonation, but I am bound to say that no woman was ever more feminine than this queen of male impersonators—something that gives one furiously to think about the eternal difference of the sexes which indubitably exists, and yet, in a sense, is not.

When Vesta Tilley came out on the Alhambra stage to sing her famous song, she gave the impression of indomitability. On the boards, no more indomitable woman ever stepped. And "step" she did. For she was one of the two or three male impersonators who really acquired the male gait, which is *the* distinguishing characteristic between the sexes.

The perky-faced schoolboy, in Eton suit and deep white collar who "follows the dear old dad" through various adventures, creditable and otherwise, looks like a boy and walks like a boy:

I don't know where he's going,
But when he gets there, I'll be glad,
Following in father's footsteps,
Following the dear old dad.

It often seemed to me that this was the most "moral" song on the "illegitimate" and that there were not only "sermons in stones."

As a "snotty" or midshipman, Vesta was "it." Where did she learn that swing from the heels, and that cock of the nose, and that evanescent "swank" of the silent Navy?

The only thing about Vesta that was not quite right were the feet. They were so tiny and so feminine, and had she been artist less great, might, so to speak, have given the show away.

One other impersonator only has reached her standard since the day of which I write—Ella Shields, and that in "Burlington Bertie."

One thing could be said about all these male impersonators —the more refined they were the more effective they were Anything "doubtful" from a woman dressed in male attire instantly took on a flavour of dirty soapsuds. The impersonator was, however, almost always the most refined of music-hall comedians and gained accordingly.

Even in those old days we could sometimes be frightfully moral, though perhaps rather smugly conscious of our morality. Some years before the period of which I am here speaking, the programme of the Royal Trocadero Palace of Varieties in Shaftesbury Avenue bore the following subscription:

> Mr. R. R Bignall requests that any improper word or action emanating from any Artist upon the Stage may be immediately communicated to the Management, that it may be enquired into and rectified.

And now we are about to watch the greater constellations swing into the orb of vision as they in the long years that are gone, swung their way into our hearts. Shooting stars, flaming meteors, or glowing steady moons, to swing and to pass from sight but not from affectionate memory.

XXVI

A NIGHT AT THE OLD TIVOLI

THE story of the English people in our day is written in its music-halls. The music-hall is essentially "English"; not "Irish" or "Scottish" or "Welsh"; and the genius of the English has largely found its expression in the English music-hall, which has no equal in the world.

Where the Frenchman writes history in the *cabaret*, still a wild foreign fowl in Piccadilly, and the German in his beer garden, the Englishman writes his in vaudeville. Or is it that he *has* written it? For the music-hall already is passing.

Some day, when England is but a name and the British Empire has passed down the long beaten road where have passed the other empires, we shall find the *savants* of that day unearthing a queer melody with the queer characters: "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay"; and another, with the refrain: "Get-yrrr-airrr-kut"; and discover in them the folk-songs of the English people, long extinct. God knows what in that time the learned men will make of two names: Dan Leno and Hackenschmidt, the Russian Lion. The former they will probably regard as a late incarnation of Pan and the latter as the myth of the sun-god, much developed.

The time perhaps is coming when we shall be able with "sensitive wireless" to recall any scene, any song, or any speech from the distant past—even Shakespeare himself, for each word spoken since time was, has left its vibrations running through the ether for ever and ever, waiting to be

gathered. If, in the fullness of time, the sensitives can show to an astounded and incredulous audience the old Tivoli, in the Strand, on one of its gala nights with all the stars twinkling brightly, that audience will be looking at the very heart-beat of the England of that day.

What a little, dear hall it was! Such a morsel of stage, soon to be swallowed by the galumptiousness of the Coliseum and the gorgeousness of the Hippodrome and Palladium. But what a programme!

Dan Leno, Albert Chevalier, Herbert Campbell, Marie Lloyd, Little Tich, Paul Cinquevalli, Vesta Tilley, Vesta Victoria, Harry Lauder. And *such* step-dancing; and *such* skirt-dancing; and such devilment generally!

It was the day of the *soubrette.* What superb creatures, as unreal as a unicorn! Do you remember the girl with whom half the town was in love—Birdie Sutherland, as she swept out from the side with a hat a waving forest of ostrich plumes, a long jewelled wand, and—I blush as I say it and as I did when I first saw them—such a pair? As I remember them, I become almost lyrical about that pair.

They were clothed in sunrise pink tights in a day when a pair of bare 'uns would have caused a riot and twelve months in gaol, for no man-about-town, when men were often very much about town, would then have dared in his wildest wickedest flights to have imagined an Isadora Duncan. They were generously hipped and straight as Mrs. Ormiston Chant, and about the slender corseted waist above them would be draped a voluminous sash.

Birdie wore very high heels, which made her seem nearly seven feet high, and she would walk up and down on those heels and pirouette a little and move her wand a little and smile a little—everything a little—but not one of us could have told you what she did, nor did it matter. For our eyes

were bulging out of our heads; our hearts were beating; and, if truth be told, we were sweating—downright sweating—in a period when this was one of the three forbidden words . . . .

Down stage he comes upon his little bandy piano-legs, with the comical turn-in of the square-toed brogues with the silver buckles, the kilts swinging any old way above, the Glengarry set jauntily upon the pawky Lowland face, and THE STICK.

The Tivoli band is playing a lilting refrain, running through it all the Scottish airs that ever were and with every mother's son beating time to it. There is a sort of throat-catch in it like the throb of an old memory—and even before that marvellous mime opens his mouth, we are lilting inside as we feel *he* is lilting inside. And now it is playing "I love a lassie!"

I love a lassie,
A bonnie Hielan' lassie,
She's as pure as the heather in the dell.
She's as pure as the heather,
The bonnie purple heather,
Jenny, my Scotch bluebell.

There comes a wink and waddle that are above price, a preliminary "Och-aye!" that comes from the heart, or it may be the stomach, to be followed by a bass of most surprising depth and *timbre*.

Harry Lauder.

Pawky, pawky Harry Lauder. Oh! the little rogue with the wink and the wall eye.

When Harry Lauder was singing these very same songs, many years before, in that very same voice and with the very same waddle and wink to an adamantine public, he received perhaps two pounds a week as reward. The same public were one day to reward him five hundred times more

for the same stuff—which is the halls, the British Public, and . . . life.

From the first, Harry takes his audience into his confidence. Right from the first bar, he gets under their skins as he recounts the joys of " roamin' in the gloamin' " :

> Roamin' in the gloamin'
> By the bonnie banks of Clyde,
> Roamin' in the gloamin'
> With my Daisy by my side—
> When the sun has gone to rest,
> That's the hour that I love best,
> Roamin' in the gloamin' with my darlin'.

If the power to get over the footlights turned on voice, then Harry Lauder's secret could be explained at once and so no more about it. But personality in the halls, or for that matter in the theatre, does not depend upon voice or appearance—it depends just upon " personality "—that quality which always in the ultimate eludes analysis.

If Harry Lauder had been dumb it would not have made any difference.

He was one of the half-dozen of the greater artists who touched the thing common to us all, that touch, as we say, that makes the whole world kin. We all know those ecstatic moments in which, though we cannot will them, we seem comrades of all the world. Yet Harry did seem to be able to call them forth at will. It is the touchstone of the supreme comedian—perhaps of the supreme human.

Harry as " the saftest of the family," counting his marbles and his sorrows. Harry as the ancient Scottish shepherd, lamenting the glories of a mis-spent youth. Harry in that marvellous motley of kilt and spur of a Hielan' cavalry regiment, name unspecified. Above all, Harry touching the chord that never fails to vibrate—the chord of our common human frailty, singing : " It's nice to get up in

the mornin' " : and every man there, listening, snuggling himself in the bedclothes :

> Oh ! it's nice to get up in the mornin',
> When the sun begins to shine,
> At four or five or six o'clock,
> In the good old summer-time ;
> But when the snow is fallin',
> And it's murky overhead—
> Oh ! it's nice to get up in the mornin',
> But it's nicer to lie in your bed.

And then the real Harry—the Harry that lies behind each one of us, whatever the mask we think we carry. Harry, the soft-hearted sentimentalist, proud of his voice and of his low note, singing without music : " Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep." Harry exhorting his audience like any preacher, letting out moral homilies upon the common things of life and of death.

It has been said of Harry Lauder as it was said of his literary prototype Charles Dickens, that he presented to the world a Scotsman who never existed. Perfectly true—and perfectly false. For the truth of the portrait lay in the caricature.

But even Harry Lauder needed the old Tivoli for his setting.

The little Scot has waddled off, the curtain has fallen, and now has risen upon an empty stage. As we watch, there springs out of the wings upon a toe and a half a rather burly figure most remarkably arrayed in very tight trousers, " cut loose rahnd the trotters," in skirted coat all covered with " pearlies " with cap to match, the whole completed by a Belcher handkerchief knotted carelessly about the bull throat.

The figure snaps its fingers as it recites with that catch in the throat—that check never again to be reproduced : " Dahn ahr street there came a toff," a gent " troubled

The Albert Chevalier of the Old "Tivoli"

Little Tich

by a narsty cough" ; and so we have burst into the chorus of " Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road."

Albert Chevalier was as much French as English, which, indeed was, perhaps, the secret of his *flair*. Even now, one refuses to believe that any Cockney born could have been such a Cockney as was the great coster comedian, who had lived in the East End to get his local colour. He had a way of doing a double-shuffle and of strutting with stiffened thigh muscles and tautly curved back that was quite his own, the very last thing in John Bullish *joie de vivre*. The way he plunged his hands into the cross-pockets of a trousers made on the principle of a trap-door front, was a liberal education in owning the earth. When however, with cap pulled a little across one eye, Mr. 'Enery 'Awkins spoke of his Donah and his wrongs, it was tragedy speaking through the mask of comedy.

For how close are these two bedfellows! I have seen a whole audience in tears as Albert Chevalier chaunted rather than sang the immortal " My Old Dutch " :

> We've been together, nah, for forty years,
> And it don't seem a day too much ;
> There ain't a lidy living in the land
> That I'd swop for my dear old Dutch ;
> There ain't a lidy living in the land
> That I'd swop for my dear old Dutch.

To think of the Tivoli is to think of Albert Chevalier, for it was there he came most closely to his audience, which, as it seemed to me, had something that the Empire and Alhambra frequenters never had. And though he did not know it, for which of us knows these things ? he was never again to recapture that " first fine careless rapture " of the Tivoli atmosphere. A man's hour never strikes twice.

Long years afterwards, when Chevalier, elderly, had returned to the stage and was running his own show in the

little Queen's Hall, with his famous pianist, West, to whom he owed so much, and when later still, at the Coliseum, some of us saw him try to run out with the same careless spring and snapping of his fingers—he made some of us weep for the things that were gone. The great artist was still there. He could still make us cry a little and laugh a little—but he could no longer make us laugh and cry together—the supreme test.

For the tides had flowed under the bridges; but Time had not retraced his steps. Instead, he had taken his inevitable toll. The final "snap" was gone, because the zest of life had gone. The bow-window told its tale. The foreshortened leap in the air, lumbago-lamed in its career, told its tale. The harder tone of the voice told its tale. For youth *will* be served.

The sedatest brougham in London with the sedatest coachman stops opposite the Tivoli, and our future audience staring out of the twenty-fifth century into the twentieth through their "wireless sensitive," sees a tiny little man, beautifully attired and with the Legion of Honour in his buttonhole, step out. His "blocker" is the curly-brimmed sauciness of the moment; his tiny patent boots are "it"; and his box-cloth coat is the "*dernier cri*," for this little gentleman can speak French as fluently as English. He is, in a word, the word of the day: "All Sir Garnet!"

The wireless of the twenty-fifth century is switched on to the interior of the hall to show the little man, now a cross between a pixie and a human, walk out from the wings upon a pair of square-toed boots, on the toes of which he will sometimes lift himself miraculously several feet in the air, what time and in between he does a break-down upon the flats with a final stamp that smashes through the hall like the crack of a bull whip.

The serio-comic eyes roll backwards and forwards as

the small hand seeks to close a tiny mouth in a politeness that mocks the " a-hem ! " which is worth a king's ransom. The boating " straw " is enchanted as it wobbles, uneasy, upon the close-cropped head, what time it rolls down the arm and back again, or falls to earth only to be taken at the very ultimate moment upon the outrageous toes and flicked into the air.

And when the large black and white checks and the natty little jacket with the two five-shilling buttons set in the small of the back have been exchanged for a blonde wig and a ball dress with a train in a day when trains were trains, with a witchery of *lingerie*, peculiar and extensive, beneath —we find before us a maiden lady of no uncertain years who is dying to be loved. And, mark you, loved for herself alone. The " mark you " is skittishly confidential from behind the tiny hand.

And now the conductor has " let 'em go " and the maiden lady has picked up her five-yard tail and, in a pair of elastic sides, that popular wear, is pirouetting like a fairy. And what she does not do with her preposterous fan is not worth speaking of.

The audience has gone mad with the lady. It stamps and howls and yowls. The more obese portions of it bend over helplessly to rest their bald heads upon the stall-back before them. The gallery whistles. For is it not our own Little Tich ? not, at this time, so far removed from the days when he cellar-flapped to his grinning schoolmates in Kennington.

Little Tich, I watched you the other evening as you walked majestically up the Charing Cross Road with a little child, and it seemed to me that with you the years had stood still. You, at least, and one other excepted, perhaps greatest of all, praises be to the Power Behind ! are still with us, and we are glad of it.

In the old Tivoli we gave 'em variety, and plenty of it. The old Tivoli was a family, not a music-hall, and everybody knew everybody else and "had one" just behind there round the corner. No damned nonsense about the artists. How often have I seen Little Tich leaning gracefully against the sides of the bar, free to the vulgar gaze, and if you bowed to him, he never forgot to bow again. Little Tich and Herbert Campbell having one together must have been a sight for the "gods."

And now the little man has trotted off the stage with a parting coyness that is above rubies, and we are waiting eagerly for the number which is about to be pushed into its frame. It comes!

Dan Leno.

But of him as of his comrade Marie Lloyd we will tell in our next memory, when we bring Dan and Marie back to the Tivoli boards out of the London night of long ago, "for one night only."

XXVII

"THE LAST TURN"

LENO. Leno the *gamin* with that comical twist of the eyes and a voice that postulated the phonograph, still to come. Leno in the waiter's dress coat that flirted his heels, his broken-down heels, rattling it out like a machine gun: "Yes, Sir! No, Sir! Yes, Sir! When I first came here, these trousers were knee breeches. Legs worn down by waiting, Sir! *What* did you say? How long would your steak be? Oh, about four inches I should say, about four inches." (The little tight head bending over, confidentially, with the bright bird-like eyes fixed upon the imaginary plate): "No, Sir. Sorry, Sir. Can't take it back now. You've stuck your fork in and let the steam out!"

Or Dan as the Shopwalker, in that age of impeccable "our Mr. Meakins's," slender waisted and frock-coated, walking up the floor with his toes pointing at the regulation forty-five. Dan, incredibly confidential as he stoops "up" —he was too tiny to stoop "down" to anybody—to the old lady who has just entered Messrs. Bash & Crash's emporium in Oxford Street: "Yes, Madam. What, Madam? No, Madam. Yes, Madam. You can ab-so-lute-ly trust me, I'm a married man meself. What, Madam! (with rising inflection and his eyes stunting) 'Red,' Madam? (and then with a delighted squeak): 'Flannel' Madam. Quite understand. I'm a married man meself."

And then the half-pivot upon the tiny waist to the new arrival: "Gloves, Madam. Yes, Madam. What! You

want those in the window at three-three-three? Can't be done, Madam, can't be done. Glued to the glass! Glued to the glass!"

Many have asked themselves the secret of the great little Dan. Many have tried to copy him. But genius cannot be copied any more than it can be defined.

And Dan's humour was always clean.

If Dan Leno had a spiritual home in London, it was the Tivoli. It was in the Tivoli he rose to his greatest heights, simply because the Tivoli was an "intimate" theatre and everybody there a friend of Dan, or Herbert, or Marie, or whoever it might be. When Dan winked, the gods winked with him. When Dan grew confidential, the stalls also became confidential. When Dan did a flip-flap as no other man in England could do it, the pit flip-flapped with him. Yet the secret was not in the wink, the flap, or the confidence. It was in Dan himself.

Like all the great comics, Dan Leno had plumbed the depths of sorrowful despair. The little Lancashire Irishman, whose real name was George Galvin, had known hunger and sickness and a misery denied to most. He was as heart-broken as the droll who was to follow him in the years, and the only one who could call himself peer to Dan—little Charlie Chaplin. For Dan Leno was neither comedian nor tragedian—he was "droll"—that thing, sometimes inhuman, which is a mixture of both and of which the great Grock, like Charlie, is a true descendant.

But now the one and only Dan has faded like a wraith from the stage, and we hold our breaths for the last turn of the London Night.

. . . . . .

There will always exist differences of opinion as to who was the greatest of the comediennes, *after* Marie Lloyd; just as there will always be differences as to who was the

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Dan Leno as "The Second Mrs. Twankeyray."

greatest of the comedians, *after* Dan Leno. But it is fact that no difference of opinion ever existed for a moment as to these two being supreme as male and female in their respective classes, as much as Adam and Eve were in their own day. And, since their passing, they have never, at least in the singing-acted word, had their peers.

Marie was made for the music-hall. The music-hall was made for Marie. She coufd never have come to her own upon the " legitimate," on which another Marie, an artiste fundamentally of her own type, Marie Tempest, had reached the higher flights of comedy. And above all, the old Tivoli was made for her. Like Dan Leno, the Tivoli was her spiritual home.

When Marie's number went up in its frame, the old Tivolians shouted and whistled and cachinnated in their joy. And when Marie came on in her blonde, blue-eyed fairness, with a wink that was a caress, and showing rather more leg and garter than was strictly compatible with the *bon ton* which she usually affected in her songs, the gods went mad and would exchange a little light badinage with their darling what time the orchestra mumbled a sort of refrain and before she got into her stride.

All things considered, no great artiste ever had poorer songs written for her than had Marie Lloyd. Either that, or was it that Marie's personality was so all-pervading, rather than overpowering, that one forgot the song in the artiste ? It is with the utmost difficulty that one can recall any of her earlier songs. If, as Gilbert found Sullivan, Marie could have found the inspired song writer, with words that were not vapid and humour other than the sexual, the star of Marie Lloyd would have shone long after the lights of the comedy legitimate had paled. As it is, we have the memory of a personality, a flaunting affectionate personality, but nothing to which to hang it.

But the secret of Marie was no secret. Her secret was that she did not have to act her part—she *was* her part. She was the people's Marie, with a great big heart beating in systole and diastole with that of her audiences. She was of the people and would have been as much at home running a whelk stall on a Saturday night under a gasoline flare in the New Cut as on the boards under the limelight.

It is the secret that so many, from cabinet ministers downwards, have sought in vain to unravel—the way to the heart of the Great British Public. And if there be a way to that heart, it is the way of life itself, for the Masses for good or ill, "up against it" from birth, are literally closer to life than the Classes, and to know them you have to come from them or to live their lives, as did Albert Chevalier when he lost himself in the Great Unwashed to study the coster soul.

The actor should never "lag superfluous on the stage." Let him either get on or get off, and for preference let him go off in a blaze of glory whilst his aureole is still undimmed. I have told how poor Chevalier lingered just that moment too long. So did the great Marie. There was not one of us who had known her in the old days who did not feel a personal humiliation and pity as we saw her, the wreck of a woman if not of an artiste, sing her "I'm one of the Ruins that Cromwell knocked abaht a bit" at the Palladium after the War.

The tragedy of Marie Lloyd was not that she grew old, which is the lot of our common mortality, but that she lingered long enough to blur the glory that once was Marie. Only one woman has been able to linger beyond the allotted span—Yvette Guilbert, who indeed is not mortal but immortal. The great Sarah Bernhardt attempted it, and with only one leg, and failed. How could Marie succeed where Sarah had failed?

Marie Lloyd, in 1891

There is no crowd like the English crowd. It sticks to its old favourites long after they have lost all that made them favourite. There is a tenacity of loyalty about the English people that makes the world wonder. When Albert Chevalier came back, it took him to its bosom as though he had never left it. When Marie, ghost of her yesterdays, lingered out her little day into the shadows that had begun to fall about her, even those who had never even seen her at her zenith roared their love because of the echo of what she had been—and that told to them by others.

That night at the Palladium, those of us who heard her sing her " Ruin that Cromwell knocked about a bit " knew that for one reeling moment she had regained her " hour," for she was the old Marie. And then, after that picture of a drunken, reckless light o' love upon whom the world has wreaked its careless pleasure, with the tear challenging the jeer in the heart of it, we saw her go off as though swept by the blast of the applause, and then saw her return. She came back from the wings, did Marie, without her wig, an old grey woman, wiping back the frowsy blousy hair from her poor worn face.

Gone were the diamonds of other days. Gone, the exquisite silk tights under the divided skirt. Gone, the inimitable wink and the toss of the head. Gone, that strut victorious and challenging. Nothing left but a poor bedraggled old woman, a remnant of what once had been.

I will always believe that, with the premonition of those about to die, the real Marie, contemptuous of convention in that dread instant, deliberately showed herself to her audience as she was, knowing the end of the road in sight.

This was her last song. In the London Music-Hall where she sang it, she reeled as she went on, whilst the audience, all unknowing, looking at such tragedy as they had never witnessed on any stage, shrieked with laughter at the

weakness of a dying woman which they mistook for buffoonery. It was the last laugh at Marie Lloyd.

I don't know whether our Marie has gone to heaven or to that Other Place which so many of the "unco' guid" predicted for her in life—but I do know this, as we get ready to ring down the curtain. Wherever Marie Lloyd may find herself, that place will find *itself* the better for her presence.

I can imagine Marie being welcomed with rapture by the heavenly choirs. I can see her sitting by the side of the patriarchs, including General Booth, perhaps much to that holy warrior's surprise and disgust, perfectly at home. I can see her trying to help poor damned souls out of the Void, for there was something about "Our Marie" that transcended both time and space.

Dear old Marie Lloyd!

As the curtain falls upon the last turn at the old Tivoli, we are thinking of you and of all those others who have come back to us "for one night only."

L'ENVOI

A NIGHT in the Palace Theatre of nearly twenty years ago. A white sheet, phantom-fed, flickering before eyes still a-wonder at the miracle of the living picture, a thing of dancing shadows and shapes inchoate, a monstrous burgeoning. And now, from out the quivering ovum of that shadow-dance emerge two wings and then a tail, like some great bird essaying its fledgling wings in the pale mists of dawn as it perches high over the blue-grey of the English Channel.

Between the wings, a man in a cap shows himself—a man thick-set, patient, expectant, gazing into the smother, waiting for the sun. A beam pierces the mists. He throws back a lever lying to his hand, and doing so, makes history. There is a whirling, a little leaping run, a lift—and Louis Blériot is in the air facing for the white cliffs of Dover.

With him, we, in that palace of pleasure, have also leaped out of the night—leaped from the embrace of the warm and friendly earth into the Age of Air. We have leaped the borderland between the thing that made possible our Nights and the unknown, passing in one hotted moment into the age of speed—of the motor engine, of the aeroplane. We have taken wings unto ourselves, and our wings have carried us out of the London Night and for ever.

Gone now are the friendly, intimate things of a leisured past. Gone are the men and women of the nights of long ago, leaving but their ghosts, unquiet, to haunt

the old familiar ways, to moan for the things that once had been and that shall never be again.

But neither from them nor from us can our flight into the unknown take the happiness of gracious memories—those memories which shall live long after we, too, have become ghosts, have passed into the dream that men call death.

1656